



Mourners hold signs that translate as “I AM CHARLIE” during a rally in support of Charlie Hebdo, a French satirical weekly newspaper that fell victim to an terrorist attack, Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2015, at Union Square in New York. French officials say 12 people were killed when masked gunmen stormed the Paris offices of the pe-riodical that had caricatured the Prophet Muhammad.

(AP Photo/John Minchillo)

At Press Time:

French Police Hunt Gunmen as World Mourns Attack

JAMEY KEATEN
ELAINE GANLEY
Associated Press
PARIS (AP) — Police hunted for three heavily armed men with possible links to al-Qaida in the military-style, methodical killing of twelve people Wednesday at the office of a satirical news-

paper that caricatured the Prophet Muhammad. President Francois Hollande, visiting the scene of France’s deadliest such attack in more than half a century, called the assault on the weekly newspaper Charlie Hebdo “an act of exceptional barbarism.”

France raised its terror alert system to the maximum — Attack Alert — and bolstered security with more than 800 extra soldiers to guard media offices, places of worship, transport and other sensitive areas. Fears had been running high in France and else-

where in Europe that jihadis returning from conflicts in Syria and Iraq would stage attacks at home. Two officials identified the suspects as French brothers Said and Cherif Kouachi, in their early 30s, and 18-year-old Hamyd Mourad, whose nationality wasn’t immedi-

ately clear. It was reported that 18-year-old Hamyd Mourad had surrendered late in the evening, but that had not been confirmed by press time.

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At Press Time:

French police hunt gunmen; world mourns attack

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Heavily armed police moved into the city of Reims, in France's Champagne country east of Paris, apparently searching for the suspects. Video from BFM-TV showed police dressed in white apparently taking samples inside an apartment. It was not immediately clear who lived there.

One of the police officials said they were linked to a Yemeni terrorist network, and Cedric Le Behec, a witness who encountered the escaping gunmen, quoted the attackers as saying: "You can tell the media that it's al-Qaida in Yemen."

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to publicly discuss the sensitive and ongoing investigation.

Cherif Kouachi was sentenced to 18 months in prison after being convicted of terrorism charges in 2008 for helping funnel fighters to Iraq's insurgency. He said he was outraged at the torture of Iraqi inmates at the U.S. prison at Abu Ghraib near Baghdad.

The masked, black-clad men with assault rifles stormed the offices near Paris' Bastille monument in the Wednesday noontime attack on the publication, which had long drawn condemnation and threats — it was firebombed in 2011 — for its depictions of Islam, although it also satirized other religions and political figures.

Shouting "Allahu akbar!" as they fired, the men used fluent, unaccented French as they called out the names of specific employees. Artist Corinne Rey told the French newspaper *L'Humanite* that she punched in the security code to the Charlie Hebdo offices after she and her young daughter were "brutally threatened" by the gunmen.

Eight journalists, two police officers, a maintenance

worker and a visitor were killed, said prosecutor Francois Molins. He said 11 people were wounded — four of them seriously.

After fleeing, the attackers collided with another vehicle, then carjacked another car before disappearing in broad daylight, Molins said.

Among the dead: the paper's editor, Stephane Charbonnier.

The staff was in an editorial meeting and the gunmen headed straight for Charbonnier — widely known by his pen name Charb —

members of France's elite anti-terrorism forces. Then they fired on the officer. "They knew exactly what they had to do and exactly where to shoot. While one kept watch and checked that the traffic was good for them, the other one delivered the final coup de grace," he said.

"Hey! We avenged the Prophet Muhammad! We killed Charlie Hebdo," one of the men shouted in French, according to video shot from a nearby building. The other dead were identified as cartoonists Georg-

repeatedly threatened for its caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad and other sketches. One cartoon, released in this week's issue and titled "Still No Attacks in France," had a caricature of a jihadi fighter saying "Just wait — we have until the end of January to present our New Year's wishes." Charb was the artist.

In a somber address to the nation Wednesday night, Hollande pledged to hunt down the killers, and pleaded with his compatriots to come together in a time of



Mourners hold signs depicting victim's eyes during a rally in support of Charlie Hebdo, a French satirical weekly newspaper that fell victim to a terrorist attack, Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2015, at Union Square in New York. French officials say 12 people were killed when masked gunmen stormed the Paris offices of the periodical that had caricatured the Prophet Muhammad.

(AP Photo/John Minchillo)

killing him and his police bodyguard first, said Christophe Crepin, a police union spokesman. Rey said the assault "lasted five minutes. I hid under a desk."

Two gunmen strolled out to a black car waiting below, one of them calmly shooting a wounded police officer in the head as he writhed on the ground, according to video and a man who watched in fear from his home across the street. The witness, who refused to allow his name to be used because he feared for his safety, said the attackers were so methodical he first thought they were

es Wolinski and Berbard Verlhac, better known as Tignous, and Jean Cabut, known as "Cabu." Also killed was Bernard Maris, an economist who was a contributor to the newspaper and was heard regularly on French radio.

Le Behec, the witness who encountered the gunmen in another part of Paris, described on his Facebook page seeing two men "get out of a bullet-ridden car with a rocket-launcher in hand, eject an old guy from his car and calmly say hi to the public, saying 'you can tell the media that it's al-Qaida in Yemen.'"

Charlie Hebdo has been

insecurity and suspicion.

"Let us unite, and we will win," he said. "Vive la France!"

France raised its security alert to the highest level and reinforced protective measures at houses of worship, stores, media offices and transportation. Schools closed across Paris, although thousands of people later jammed Republique Square near the site of the shooting to honor the victims, waving pens and papers reading "Je suis Charlie" — "I am Charlie." Similar rallies were held in London, as well as Madrid, Barcelona, Berlin and Brussels. □

Provocation was mission of editor of Charlie Hebdo

RAVI SOMAIYA

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Stéphane Charbonnier, the editorial director of the French satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo, was often pictured with his fist aloft. Charbonnier, 47, a cartoonist known professionally as Charb, was among 12 people killed Wednesday when gunmen attacked his newspaper's offices in Paris. He had been instrumental in a series of defiant campaigns that divided public opinion.

He oversaw the publication of a spoof issue in 2011, advertised as guest edited by the Prophet Muhammad, which led to the paper's offices being firebombed. In 2012, Charbonnier defied the advice of the French government and published crude caricatures of Muhammad, shown naked and in sexual poses. Depictions of the prophet, even if reverent, are forbidden by Islamic law. "Is it really sensible or intelligent to pour oil on the fire?" asked Laurent Fabius, the foreign minister at the time. Charbonnier did not see it in those terms, those who knew him and who had followed his magazine's work said. It was, for him, a matter of freedom to think and speak as one wished, said Daniel Leconte, who made a documentary about Charlie Hebdo and its battles over the Muhammad cartoons.

"Why should they prohibit these people from expressing themselves?" Charbonnier said at the time. "We have the right to express ourselves; they have the right to express themselves, too."

Charbonnier had worked at Charlie Hebdo for more than 20 years, he said in an interview with Al-Jazeera English in 2012. For that entire time, he said, the newspaper had been "provocative on many subjects."

"It just so happens that every time we deal with radical Islam we have a problem and we get indignant or violent reactions," he said. □



A Lebanese police car blocks a main road that links to Beirut, after the mountain roads were blocked by the snow, in Chtoura town, in the Bekaa valley, east Lebanon, Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2015.

(AP Photo/Hussein Malla)

Heavy snowfall, strong winter storm hits across Middle East

HUSSEIN MALLA
DIAA HADID

Associated Press

ANJAR, Lebanon (AP) — Snow fell in parts of the Middle East on Wednesday as a powerful winter storm swept through the region, killing two Syrian refugees in Lebanon and forcing thousands who have fled their country's civil war to huddle for warmth in tents in refugee camps.

In Syria, the guns fell silent as snow fell in the cities of Damascus and Aleppo and government warplanes remained on the ground because of bad visibility.

The storm dumped rain and hail on Lebanon's coast and heavy snows in the mountains and central Bekaa Valley. Gas stations, schools, banks and shops shuttered and power was cut throughout Lebanon, but it was particularly trying for the hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees who live in tents and makeshift shelters.

In eastern Lebanon, security officials said a Syrian shepherd, Ammar Kamel, 30, and a 7-year-old boy, Majed Badawi, died in the storm Wednesday as they made the dangerous trek through the rugged, snow-covered mountains from Syria to the Lebanese border town of Chebaa. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.

Near the town of Anjar, on the border with Syria,

refugees used brooms and sticks to try to clear heavy snow from the tops of their tents, fearing the shelters would collapse. Inside, adults huddled around wood-burning stoves to try to keep warm.

In Beirut's slum of Shatila, residents waded through dirty water and floating garbage that clogged the narrow alleys while children played, trying to catch hail. Ibtisam Mohammed, a 37-year-old mother of seven, managed to get her rusting diesel stove working again on Wednesday, in an effort to warm her home. The wind had ripped away the plastic sheet used for windows and water dripped on the floor from the tin roof.

"We dragged the mattress to that corner, it's the only dry place in the house," she said, adding she hoped the cold wouldn't make her sicker — she has throat cancer and relies on charity for medical care.

Nearby, Abu Hussein, 32, huddled under blankets in his tiny one-room home with his two children. "This is how we keep warm," he laughed. Elsewhere, Palestinian authorities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip declared a state of emergency over the storm. An eight-month-old Palestinian infant in the Tulkarem refugee camp died in a fire caused by a heating stove, said Palestinian civil defense ministry spokesman Louay Bani Odeh. □

Tail of crashed AirAsia plane discovered

ACHMAD IBRAHIM

Associated Press

PANGKALAN BUN, Indonesia (AP) — Divers and an unmanned underwater vehicle on Wednesday spotted the tail of the AirAsia plane that crashed into the Java Sea with 162 people on board, an important finding because the jet's all-important black boxes are located in that part of the aircraft.

Powerful currents and murky water continue to hinder the operation, but searchers managed to get a photograph of the debris — about 9 kilometers (nearly 6 miles) from where Flight 8501 lost contact Dec. 28 — after it was detected by an Indonesian survey ship, National Search and Rescue chief Henry Bambang Soelistyo told reporters.

One released image appeared to show an upside down "A" painted on a piece of metal, while an-

If it is the right part of the tail section, he tweeted, then the cockpit voice and flight data recorders, or black boxes, "should be there."

He said the airline's priority still is to recover all the bodies "to ease the pain of our families."

The carrier, meanwhile, said families of those killed would be compensated in accordance with Indonesian laws.

Each will receive \$100,000 (1.25 billion rupiah), Sunu Widyatmoko, president of AirAsia Indonesia, told reporters in Surabaya.

So far, 40 corpses have been found, including an additional one announced Wednesday, but time is running out.

At two weeks, most corpses will sink, said Anton Castilani, head of Indonesia's disaster identification victim unit, and there are already signs of serious decomposition.

board. It is not clear what caused the crash, but bad weather is believed to be a contributing factor.

Just before losing contact, the pilot told air traffic control he was approaching threatening clouds, but was denied permission to climb to a higher altitude because of heavy air traffic. No distress signal was issued.

Finding the black boxes will be key to the investigation. They provide essential information about the plane along with final conversations between the captain and co-pilot. Sonar-equipped ships involved in the massive international hunt have identified what they believe to be the fuselage of the plane in recent days. Five other big objects have been found on the floor of the ocean, though no visual confirmation has been obtained yet. Smaller pieces of the plane, such



In this underwater photo released on Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2015, the part of the wreckage that BASARNAS identified as of the ill-fated AirAsia Flight 8501 is seen in the waters of the Java Sea, Indonesia. Divers and an unmanned underwater vehicle spotted the tail of the missing AirAsia plane in the Java Sea on Wednesday, the first confirmed sighting of any major wreckage 11 days after Flight 8501 disappeared with the passengers and crew members on board.

(AP Photo/BASARNAS)

other grainy shot depicted some mechanical parts.

"Today we successfully discovered the part of the plane that became the main aim since yesterday," Soelistyo said. "I can ensure that this is part of the tail with the AirAsia mark on it." Tony Fernandes, AirAsia's chief executive officer, welcomed the news.

Officials are hopeful many of the more than 122 bodies still unaccounted for will be found inside the fuselage, which is believed to be lying near the tail.

The Airbus A320 went down halfway through a two-hour flight between Indonesia's second-largest city of Surabaya and Singapore, killing everyone on

as seats and an emergency door, have been collected from the surface.

The search area for bodies and debris was expanded this week to allow for the strong currents that have been pushing debris around, said Indonesian search and rescue operation coordinator Tatang Zainudin. □

On 3-State Tour:

Obama expected to offer State of the Union 'spoilers'

**MICHAEL D. SHEAR
JULIE DAVIS**

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President Barack Obama went to Detroit on Wednesday to kick off a three-day, three-state presidential trip that is intended to steal the political spotlight from the newly empowered Republicans on Capitol Hill during their first week in control of Congress.

Speaking at a Ford automobile manufacturing plant that is building both gasoline-powered hybrid vehicles and plug-in electric vehicles, Obama claimed credit for the nation's economic improvement during his first six years in office, in part by highlighting the robust recovery of the auto industry that he agreed to bail out in 2009.

"Plants like this one built more than cars. They built the middle class in this country, and that was worth fighting for," Obama told a crowd of autoworkers. "Saving the American auto industry was the right thing to do. Betting on you was the right thing to do." The president has frequently returned to Detroit to brag about the success of his early - and controversial - use of taxpayer money to rescue two of the three American car companies. But on Wednesday, Obama went further, saying that, like the auto in-

dustry, the U.S. economy is booming again.

"As a country, we have every right to be proud of what we have got to show for that hard work," Obama said. "America's resurgence is real. Don't let anybody tell you otherwise."

visit Knoxville, Tennessee, to discuss the need to make college affordable for everyone.

The president's advisers are calling the visits "SOTU Spoilers," using the acronym for the president's annual State of the Union address to a joint session of Congress.

in an otherwise predictable event.

But in the prelude to this year's speech, set for Jan. 20, Obama is traveling the country and dribbling out some proposals in advance.

"There will still be plenty of moments on the big night,"

didn't want to wait until the State of the Union to take new steps to help the middle class and lay out his ideas to keep strengthening the economy."

In Detroit, Obama cited a series of statistics that he said was evidence of the American comeback: the creation of 11 million private-sector jobs, the enrollment of 10 million people in health care plans, and a surge in American manufacturing.

"We're making more stuff, we're selling it around the world," he said.

For years, the White House has been wary of declaring an economic victory even as many families continued to struggle financially. But aides said Obama's policies have set the stage for a more impressive recovery.

"We have seen the American economy build up some more momentum, particularly in the second half of last year," said Josh Earnest, the White House press secretary. "The result has been not just that we staved off a second Great Depression but we've actually laid the groundwork for a stronger recovery that's actually the envy of the entire world."

In an interview Tuesday with The Detroit News, Obama talked about making the tough choice to bail out the auto industry despite harsh criticism from some who said that the government should have let private companies rise or fall without government intervention.

There were concerns that if the industry collapsed "right at a time when we're teetering on the brink of a Depression - that we might not be able to control the fallout," Obama said, according to the newspaper. "The question was not, 'Do we intervene?' " he said. "The question was, 'How do we intervene in a way that actually spurs the sort of restructuring that gives American automakers the chance to get back in the game?'"



President Barack Obama speaks at Ford's Michigan Assembly Plant in Wayne, Mich., Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2015. Calling the 2009 federal auto bailout a success story, Obama touted steps taken by his administration that he said have brought the economy and U.S. manufacturing roaring back to life.

(AP Photo/Paul Sancya)

The speech in Michigan is the first he will give this week. On Thursday, the president will talk in Phoenix about efforts to bolster the still struggling housing market. And on Friday, he will

The prime-time speech traditionally includes an array of policy proposals and announcements that are kept secret until the final hours before the president delivers it, to build public interest

Dan Pfeiffer, Obama's senior adviser, wrote Wednesday morning in an op-ed article posted on Medium. He added, "Building on the momentum of the last several weeks, the president

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Police fatally shoot man at Ohio airport amid confrontation

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — A man who tried to buy an airline ticket using a fake ID was fatally shot Wednesday after returning to his illegally parked car, where he lunged at an airport police officer with a knife during a confrontation, police said.

The man had multiple knives on him and suspi-

cious items in his car that led to a bomb squad investigation, Police Sgt. Rich Weiner said. The man was identified only as a Columbus-area resident in his early 40s pending notification of his relatives.

After the first shots were fired, the man got back up and headed back toward the terminal, at which point a second airport of-

ficer shot him, Weiner said. It was unclear whether he was shot by both officers. He was shot multiple times, Weiner said.

Police are investigating the man's background and why he was using a fake ID to buy a ticket.

"At this point this is just a violent encounter between an armed man and the officers here," Weiner said.

Surveillance video, which was not released, will show what happened, he said.

The incident caused some airport delays as the ticketing level was put off limits and passengers were diverted to a lower-level area to enter the airport, said Elaine Roberts, president and chief executive officer of Columbus Regional Airport Authority.

The confrontation outside occurred after the officer called a tow truck for the man's vehicle, which he left illegally parked in the departures area.

That area was blocked off Wednesday afternoon, but the airport said flights were running as scheduled. Departing passengers were directed to enter through the arrivals area. □

FBI director gives clues tying North Korea to Sony hack

TOM HAYS

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The FBI director revealed new details Wednesday about the stunning cyberattack against Sony Pictures Entertainment Inc., part of the Obama administration's effort to challenge persistent skepticism about whether North Korea's government was responsible for the brazen hacking. Speaking at the International Conference on Cyber Security at Fordham University, FBI Director James Comey revealed that the hackers "got sloppy" and mistakenly sent messages directly that could be traced to IP addresses used exclusively by North Korea. Comey said the hackers had sought to use proxy computer servers, a common ploy hackers use to disguise their identities and throw investigators off their trail by hiding their true locations.

"It was a mistake by them," he said. "It made it very



James Comey, director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, at the FBI offices in Buffalo, N.Y.. Comey said on Jan. 7 that no one should doubt that the North Korean government was behind the destructive attack on Sony's computer network last fall.

(Nathaniel Brooks/The New York Times)

clear who was doing this." The Associated Press reported Dec. 20 that the FBI had discovered that computer Internet addresses known to be operated by North Korea were communicating directly with other

computers used to deploy and control the hacking tools and collect the stolen Sony files.

The FBI previously said its evidence also included similarities to other tools developed by North Korea in

specific lines of computer code, encryption algorithms and data deletion methods.

"I have very high confidence about this attribution to North Korea, as does the entire intelligence

community," Comey said. North Korea has denied it was involved in the hacking.

Comey said the Sony attack had "clear links" to malware developed by North Korea, Comey said. The same tools were used in an attack last year on South Korean banks and media outlets, he said.

Finally, the FBI's Behavioral Analysis Unit studied statements and threats purporting to be from Guardians of Peace and compared them to other known attacks by the North Koreans, Comey said.

The unit told him, "Easy for us - it's the same actors," Comey said.

Comey said the evidence should undermine persistent skepticism by some cyber experts that individual hackers or a disgruntled insider were the culprits behind a hack that sabotaged the wide release of "The Interview," a comedy about a plot to kill North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. □

Investigators: Shooter at VA hospital was ex-employee

RUSSELL CONTRERAS

SETH ROBBINS

Associated Press

EL PASO, Texas (AP) — A man who fatally shot a doctor at a Texas veterans' hospital before turning the gun on himself was a former clerk at the clinic who had threatened the victim in 2013, the FBI said Wednesday.

The FBI identified the gunman in Tuesday's shooting as Jerry Serrato. Douglas Lindquist, who heads the

FBI's El Paso office, said Serrato used a .380-caliber handgun to shoot Dr. Timothy Fjordbak and himself at the El Paso Veterans Affairs Health Care System at Fort Bliss.

Officials did not provide a motive for the shooting. Fjordbak had reported Serrato made a verbal threat against him at an El Paso supermarket in 2013. Lindquist said Serrato had some sort of perceived or real grievance against Fjordbak and

had something to the effect of, "I know what you did and I will take care of it."

Hundreds of patients, staff and others were at the clinic when the shooting happened.

The shooting comes just four months after Fort Bliss' commanding officer announced new security measures after a military assessment found the base was not fully in compliance with Department of De-

fense directives. The measures included random vehicle checks and limiting access to Defense Department personnel at some gates. However, four gates still remained open to the public, according to a press release.

Sutton Smith, a worker at the VA clinic, said a "code white" was issued over the intercom system Tuesday indicating an active shooter and ordering people to

seek shelter.

Smith said he hid with about a dozen people in a locked room with the lights off for some two hours. Apart from the initial alert and some communication among managers via cell phone, no official updates were provided during the lockdown, he said.

The VA said in a statement that it was "deeply saddened" by the attack and was assisting in investigations. □

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Brutal cold forces schools throughout Midwest to close

MITCH SMITH

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CHICAGO - A blast of cold air closed schools here and throughout much of the Midwest on Wednesday, forcing people to deal with plunging temperatures and treacherous wind chills. The National Weather Service predicted subzero temperatures in Chicago with wind chills reaching minus 27 degrees, a shocking wave of cold even for a city that takes pride in toughing out brutal winters. In parts of Vermont, the Weather Service is warning that wind chills could be 20 to 40 degrees below zero into Thursday. Even Southern states like Alabama, Georgia and Mississippi were bracing for wind chills overnight of zero or below. Besides closing schools, the bitter blast of cold led to the suspension of trash collection, delayed the opening



Tony Vinciguerra has steam rise from his head as he walks in near-zero degree fahrenheit temperatures in downtown Chicago, Jan. 7, 2015. Chicago's schools were among the districts in the Midwest that canceled classes Wednesday in response to the chill of arctic air that settled over the region.

(Andrew Nelles/The New York Times)

of government offices and hampered public transit. In St. Louis, where the sun

was expected to be out even as wind chills dipped well below zero, city offi-

cials announced that they would operate an overflow shelter at night to provide

people with food and a place to sleep.

The Chicago Public Schools, which have had only a handful of weather-related closings in recent decades, announced Tuesday evening that its roughly 400,000 students would have Wednesday off. School officials in Minneapolis; Kansas City, Missouri; Des Moines, Iowa; Omaha, Nebraska; and countless other districts also canceled classes for Wednesday. Still, some people seemed to just go about their business. After suffering through weeks of sustained cold a year ago, Mike Jara, a bike messenger in Chicago, said he was well-prepared for Wednesday's chill.

"It's a little easier than last winter," said Jara, 22, who wore heavy boots, a thick jacket and snowboarding goggles to deliver packages downtown. "At least this time, Chicagoans, they're definitely prepared."

Foot traffic in downtown Chicago, however, was noticeably lower. In Millennium Park, a popular tourist spot, the sidewalks were mostly empty. Only a handful of well-bundled people stopped to take a photo in front of the Cloud Gate sculpture, and the skating rink had just a few customers. Erin Beck, a hotel employee on Mackinac Island in northern Michigan, said she rode her snowmobile the 2 miles to work Wednesday. The extreme cold is good news for islanders, she said, because it means the lake will soon freeze over and she can go to the mainland for groceries. □

Federal judge blocks California foie gras ban

BRIAN MELLEY

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Foie gras can go back on the menu in California after a federal judge on Wednesday overturned the state's ban on the sale of the fatty duck and goose liver. U.S. District Judge Stephen V. Wilson permanently blocked the state attorney general from enforcing the law that took effect in 2012, finding that the federal government's authority to regulate foie gras and other poultry products supersedes the state law. The ruling rankled animal-

rights groups, who say the practice of fattening the birds is cruel. They urged Attorney General Kamala Harris to appeal the decision, though her office had no immediate comment. State lawmakers barred California farmers from force-feeding birds with a tube, which is how foie gras is produced. The state also banned sales of the delicacy, prohibiting imports from being served in restaurants or sold in markets.

Foie gras farmers in Canada and New York and the Hermosa Beach restaurant Hot's Kitchen sued to over-

turn the law. While the ruling does not lift the ban on producing foie gras in California, it clears the way to resume serving it.

"Let the foie start flowing again!" said chef Sean Chaney of Hot's Kitchen. The judge had previously rejected claims by the foie gras supporters that the law violated federal law because California couldn't impose its regulations beyond state borders. But they amended their lawsuit to say state law was pre-empted by the federal Poultry Products Inspection Act. That law prevents

states from imposing labeling, packaging or ingredient requirements in addition to or different from federal standards.

The main question was whether the state was imposing its ban on an ingredient or a process. The judge rejected the state's argument that the law was aimed at barring products created by a particular process.

"California cannot regulate foie gras products' ingredients by creatively phrasing its law in terms of the manner in which those ingredients were produced, □

US companies boosted hiring for December

C. S. RUGABER

AP Economics Writer
WASHINGTON (AP)

— U.S. businesses ramped up hiring last month in the latest sign that the nation's economy is expanding despite worries about global growth that have sent financial markets tumbling. Payroll processor ADP said Wednesday that companies added 241,000 jobs in December, up from 227,000 in November. That suggests Friday's government report on December job gains will also be healthy.

The ADP numbers cover only private businesses and sometimes diverge from the government's more comprehensive report, which includes government agencies.

Economists forecast the government's figures will show that employers added 240,000 jobs in December, according to a survey by financial data provider FactSet. The unemployment rate is expected to remain at 5.8 percent.

Hiring was solid across most large industries and company sizes. Manufacturers added 26,000 jobs, the second-highest monthly total in 2014 and up from 16,000 in November. Construction firms added 23,000, up from 20,000 the previous month.

Small companies with fewer than 50 employees gained 106,000 jobs, up from 99,000 in November. Medium-sized firms gained 70,000 jobs and large companies 66,000.

Strong economic growth has encouraged employers to ramp up hiring. The economy expanded at a 5 percent annual rate in the July-September quarter, the healthiest pace since 2003. And that followed 4.6 percent growth in the April-June quarter.

Employers added nearly 2.7 million new jobs in the first 11 months of last year, the most since 1999. Still, the job market is not yet back to full health.

US Financial Front:

Shrinking foreign oil bill lowers US trade deficit

MARTIN CRUTSINGER

AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP)

— The U.S. trade deficit fell in November to the lowest level in almost a year, thanks to the country's swiftly shrinking thirst for foreign oil.

The deficit — imports minus exports — narrowed to \$39 billion during the month, down 7.7 percent from a revised October deficit of \$42.2 billion, the Commerce Department reported Wednesday.

U.S. exports slipped 1 percent to \$196.4 billion amid lower sales of commercial airliners.

Primarily due to oil, imports posted a steeper drop of 2.2 percent to \$235.4 billion. The volume of crude imported in November hit its lowest level since 1994, while the average price hit a two-year low of \$82.95 a barrel. A simultaneous boom in domestic oil production has also cut the country's reliance on imported oil.

Economists predict that the oil market will continue to reduce the U.S. trade deficit and potentially bolster the overall economy. To be sure, a lower bill for foreign oil is likely to be offset somewhat by a stronger dollar, which makes U.S. goods more expensive in overseas markets, and economic weakness in such key export markets as Europe and Japan.

"The trade gap will con-

tinue to shrink apace until the oil import tab stops falling like a rock," said Patrick Newport, an economist at Global Insight.

Some analysts revised their forecast for overall growth in the October-December quarter higher based on the better-than-expected

of 3 percent or higher in the fourth quarter.

The November deficit was the lowest since a trade gap of \$37.4 billion in December 2013. Through the first 11 months of 2014, the deficit is running 5.1 percent above the same period in 2013.

tices such as the country's manipulation of its currency to gain trade advantages over American companies. The widening trade gap with China comes at a time when the Obama administration hopes to finally get Congress to approve the fast-track authority it



A container ship is moored at the Port of Seattle's seaport on the Duwamish Waterway, south of downtown Seattle. The Commerce Department released international trade data for November on Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2015.

(AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)

November trade report.

Ian Shepherdson, chief economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics, said trade would be less of a drag in the fourth quarter than he had previously thought.

He now projects overall economic growth of 2.25 percent in the October-December quarter. Other economists are more optimistic and estimate growth

The politically sensitive trade deficit with China dropped 8 percent to \$29.9 billion in November but remained on track to set a new all-time high for the year. America's deficit with China is the largest for any country. It has added to pressure on Congress and the Obama administration to take tougher actions against what critics see as unfair Chinese trade prac-

needs to wrap up a major 12-nation trade agreement with Pacific Rim countries known as the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

The administration sees the trade deal as one of the areas where President Barack Obama may be able to find common ground with Republicans who took control of the Senate this week and now control both chambers of Congress.

Despite global weakness, Fed upbeat on economy

MARTIN CRUTSINGER

AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP)

— Federal Reserve policymakers who met in December expressed concern about weakness overseas but were upbeat enough about the U.S. economy and impact of lower oil prices to prepare for a likely interest rate hike sometime this year.

Minutes of the Fed's Dec. 16-17 meeting released Wednesday show that Fed officials believed stagnant global growth posed one

of the biggest downside risks to the U.S., particularly if it triggered turmoil in global financial markets or if any policy moves abroad proved ineffective.

"However, the downside risks were seen as nearly balanced by risks to the upside," the minutes said.

Officials noted the robust improvement in job growth, as well as consumer and business confidence. Several board members said the economy "may end up showing more momentum than anticipated," while others "thought that the boost to domestic spending from lower energy prices could turn out to be quite large," according to the minutes.

While they generally agreed on the direction of the U.S. economy, board members held a spirited debate over how best to word the Fed's intentions. In the end, they decided to update its policy statement by saying it would be "patient" in moving toward a rate hike.

Officials also indicated

that they might be willing to raise rates even if inflation hovers below the Fed's 2-percent target, especially given that falling energy prices and a stronger dollar would keep prices muted for "some time."

The minutes stressed that the timing of the Fed's rate hikes would be dependent on incoming economic data, although its choice of the word "patient" suggests that a rate hike is unlikely for at least the next two meetings, the minutes stated.

American Living:

Long a College Town, Worcester Now Looks the Part



The Worcester Common Oval in Worcester, Mass. The city, home to nine institutions of higher learning, is filling up with the civic amenities that attract new residents.

(Charlie Mahoney/The New York Times)

KEITH SCHNEIDER

© 2015 New York Times

WORCESTER, Mass. - Although

College of the Holy Cross was founded here in 1843, and eight other prominent institutions of higher learning followed, it has taken most of the last two centuries for this sizable New England city to consider itself a college town.

It does now. From one end of the city's 245-acre central core to the other, Worcester is attending to the 35,000 college students who study and live here, and its primary boulevards are steadily filling up with the civic amenities that attract new residents. They include a busy public transit hub; comfortable and affordable housing; new restaurants and watering holes; computer stores and coffee shops; a performing arts theater; biotech research facilities; incubators and office space for start-up companies; and renovated parks, including one alongside City Hall with an ice rink larger than the one in Rockefeller Center.

The newest project in Worcester's revitalization portfolio is CitySquare, a \$565 million, 12-acre mixed-use development just east of City Hall. It replaces a two-story, 1 million-square-foot downtown shopping

mall that took up almost 10 percent of Worcester's central business district.

The former Worcester Center Galleria, built at a cost of \$127 million, thrived for a decade after it opened

Market interest in CitySquare has been strong, according to city data. In 2013, Unum, a Tennessee-based insurer, opened a \$76 million, 214,000-square-foot, seven-story office tower



Bars and restaurants on Shrewsbury Street, part of the redevelopment in Worcester, Mass.

(Charlie Mahoney/The New York Times)

in 1971, but by the turn of the century, it had gone dark. In the two years since it was demolished, Worcester spent \$59 million burying utilities, preparing building sites for new construction, and reconstructing and connecting four streets in the district to the city's street grid.

alongside an 860-space parking garage. St. Vincent Hospital built a \$30 million Cancer and Wellness Center.

Across the street, the Worcester Regional Transit Authority built a \$14 million bus transit hub alongside 103-year-old Union Station, which reopened in 2000 af-

ter a \$32 million renovation. The station is on Amtrak's Lake Shore Limited line and is a stop for 20 commuter trains daily to and from Boston that serve 1,500 passengers.

In 2014, the city and Hanover Insurance Group, the primary landholder and CitySquare development manager, finished agreements with Roseland Property Co. to build 370 market-rate rental apartments in a cluster of five-story residential buildings at a cost of \$90 million. The first building will hold 239 apartments; the second building 131. Next door to the apartments will be a \$36 million, six-story Marriott Hotel with 150 rooms. The hotel will sit atop a two-level parking deck, now being built, that will be large enough for 550 vehicles. Construction of the residential project is scheduled to start this spring, with hotel construction to follow.

Just a single 1.2-acre par-

vehicles in our downtown," said Michael E. Traynor, the city's chief development officer. "You couldn't walk from City Hall to the train station. It just killed the spirit of this city and was a big turnoff for students. Now with the mall gone, new buildings in place, new streets, new businesses settling there, it's like 'Welcome to the 21st-century economy.'"

According to the Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Worcester's steady redevelopment, fostered by well over \$1.3 billion in public and private investment, is producing results that are at the top of urban demographic and economic performance in New England. The city's population has climbed to more than 182,000 residents, up 13 percent from its modern low of under 162,000 in 1990. Worcester is now the second-largest city in New England.

The jobless rate in October, 5.6 percent, was lower than the state's unemployment rate of 6 percent. The city added 6,900 new jobs from October 2013 to October 2014, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and average wages during that period increased nearly 5 percent.

Quinsigamond Community College also is involved in the city's resurgence. In 2014, the two-year college expanded its campus to a building that once was the newsroom and printing plant for The Worcester Telegram & Gazette. The building on Franklin Street, across from City Hall, was renovated at a cost of \$40 million. The college's laboratories and training suites occupy 73,000 square feet of the 135,000-square-foot, four-story building.

In a telling detail that illustrates just how serious college administrators are about their downtown mission, the renovation plan deliberately left out a cafeteria. "Part of our plan was to put feet on the street," said Gail E. Carberry, Quinsigamond's president.

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Suicide bomber kills at least 37 at Yemen police academy

AHMED AL-HAJ
Associated Press

SANAA, Yemen (AP) — A suicide bomber rammed his explosives-laden minibus into a gathering of recruits outside a police academy in the heart of Yemen's capital on Wednesday, killing at least 37 people in the latest high-profile attack to hit Sanaa. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack, but Yemen's local al-Qaida branch has carried out similar assaults in the past against the army and police in this impoverished Arabian Peninsula country, viewing them as U.S. proxies.

The U.S. provides counter-terrorism training and assistance to Yemeni forces, and frequently carries out drone strikes targeting al-Qaida militants in Yemen. At the scene of the blast, the dead and wounded lay on a sidewalk against a wall. On the pavement, water sprayed by firefighters to extinguish the blaze from the explosion of the minibus mixed with pools of blood. A charred taxi cab smoldered near what remained of the minibus, meters (yards) from the gate of the police academy, located in a residential area.

The bomber struck as cadets were lined up outside the academy, preparing to enroll, witnesses said.

"It went off among all of them, and they flew through the air," eyewitness Jamil al-Khaleedi told The Associated Press.

Police Brig. Gen. Abdulaziz al-Qudsi said at least 37 people were killed and 66 wounded. Another security official, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to media, said at least three civilians were among

the dead.

Both the United Nations and the United States condemned the attack and expressed condolences to the victims and their families. Violence has soared in Yemen since Shiite rebels known as Houthis swept down from their northern strongholds last year, capturing Sanaa and other cities.

The rebels are challenging the government of President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, demanding a greater share of power. But on occasion, the rebels have also gone after al-Qaida, with clashes and targeted attacks leaving scores dead. Critics of the rebels view them as a proxy for Shiite powerhouse Iran — charges the rebels deny.

Tribal leaders and Yemeni officials have said the rising power of the Houthis, their advance into Sunni areas and the backlash over



A Yemeni police investigator collects pictures of police cadets who were killed in a car bombing outside a police academy in Sanaa, Yemen, Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2015. Cadets brought their pictures to register at the academy. A suicide bomber driving a minibus full of explosives killed tens of people Wednesday morning as cadets gathered near the police academy in the heart of Yemen's capital, Sanaa, security officials and witnesses said.

(AP Photo/Hani Mohammed)

drone strikes has caused al-Qaida to surge in strength and find new recruits.

Washington considers al-Qaida's Yemen affiliate, linked to several failed at-

tacks in the U.S., to be the most dangerous branch of the global terror network.

In 2012, the group claimed responsibility for another devastating attack on se-

curity forces — a suicide bombing at a rehearsal for a military parade in May in Sanaa that killed 96 soldiers and wounded at least 200.

□

Iran's supreme leader skeptical of US nuclear talks

THOMAS ERDBRINK
© 2015 New York Times

TEHRAN, Iran - Iran's supreme leader said Wednesday his country should find internal solutions for dealing with economic sanctions and that the United States could not be trusted to lift sanctions in the event a nuclear agreement is reached. The leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, reiterated in a speech published on his personal website that he did not oppose the negotiations with the United States and other world powers over Iran's nuclear program, but said Iranians needed to rely on "bright and realistic glimmers of hope, and not on imaginary ones."

Those talks are scheduled

to resume Jan. 18 in Geneva, Iran's state Islamic Republic News Agency reported Tuesday.

In his first public criticism of the government of President Hassan Rouhani since his election in 2013, Khamenei said the government should "trust the people and domestic forces." He expressed deep skepticism about the nuclear talks, warning the government that "efforts must be made to immunize Iran against the sanctions" so that "the people would not be hurt." Tehran insists it is pursuing a nuclear program for peaceful purposes, but the Western powers say it is intent on building a nuclear weapon. Any deal to contain Iran's nuclear ambi-

tions is expected to call for a relaxation of sanctions.

Khamenei has the final say on strategic matters in Iran and will ultimately decide whether to accept a nuclear compromise. The recent drop in oil prices may be a factor in his thinking, with an expected \$30 billion decline in revenues worsening an already grim economic outlook.

On Sunday, Rouhani said the economy was in a bad state and that it could no longer be held hostage to an anti-American and anti-Western ideology and should be treated less ideologically. He also said direct referendums must be organized so ordinary Iranians could exercise more influence over important

national decisions, like the nuclear deal.

Khamenei seemed to be answering those remarks, saying the nation had enjoyed great success, in contrast to the "wrong and uncalculated remarks that some make."

He warned against trusting the enemy, which is a usual reference to the United States.

"No one should imagine that the enemy may stop its enmity and maliciousness," Khamenei said. "Once you forget and trust the enemy, then the enemy finds the chance to pursue its goals in the country. But if you identify the enemy and you are strong, ready, arrogance will inevitably stop its enmity." □

Colombia rebel group opens door to peace talks

JOSHUA GOODMAN

Associated Press

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) —

Colombia's second-largest rebel group said Wednesday it's willing to lay down its weapons if government-brokered peace talks open political space for leftist groups.

The National Liberation Army made the announcement by releasing a video in which the group's top

commander, Nicolas Rodriguez, addresses guerrilla fighters gathered in the jungle for a clandestine congress.

In the video, the guerrilla leader best known by his nom de guerre Gabino says the group is willing to enter dialogue with the government aimed at ending the half-century conflict.

Although he didn't provide any details about the next

steps, it was the clearest sign yet that the ELN is prepared to take up the government's offer, repeated this week by President Juan Manuel Santos,

to initiate a formal peace process like the one underway the past two years with the much-larger and more-powerful Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, known as the FARC. Until now the two sides have

held only informal, exploratory talks.

Founded 50 years ago by Rodriguez and a group of leftist Roman Catholic priests and activists inspired by Cuba's revolution, the ELN has about 2,000 fighters, compared to some 8,000 for the FARC.

The group, considered a foreign terrorist organization by the United States, has a long history of kid-

napping foreigners for ransom, of extorting businesses and of sabotaging Colombia's main oil pipeline.

The apparent engagement with the ELN comes as Santos tries to close in on a deal with the FARC, holding out this week the possibility of a bilateral ceasefire to reflect what he considers the group's demonstrated commitment to reduce hostilities. □

Uganda confirms ID of LRA leader who surrendered

RISDEL KASASIRA

Associated Press

KAMPALA, Uganda (AP) —

Uganda's military said Wednesday it had confirmed the identify of Lord's Resistance Army rebel commander Dominic Ongwen who surrendered to American troops in Central African Republic.

Lt. Col. Paddy Ankunda, the Ugandan army spokesman, said soldiers and Ongwen's former colleagues who defected from the LRA had positively identified him.

"I can confirm that he is the one. We have duly identified him. There is no doubt about his identity," Ankunda said. The man turned himself over to U.S. soldiers in Central African Republic on Tuesday, officials in Washington said.

The Uganda's Foreign Affairs Permanent Secretary, James Mugume, told The Associated Press that a Ugandan legal team was to consult with the Inter-



A U.S. Army special forces Master Sergeant, center, speaks with troops from the Central African Republic and Uganda, in Obo, Central African Republic, where U.S. special forces have paired up with local troops and Ugandan soldiers to seek out Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

(AP Photo/Ben Curtis)

national Criminal Court on whether the rebel commander should be moved to The Hague for trial or be tried at home. The LRA's rebellion began in Uganda.

Mugume said the ICC and Uganda government would discuss the ICC

"Complementarity Principle," which he said gives states first responsibility and right to prosecute international crimes like those allegedly committed by Ongwen.

In the Netherlands, ICC spokesman Fadi El Abdal-

lah told AP he had no immediate comment. ICC prosecutors also had no immediate comment on Ongwen's detention.

The ICC warrant of arrest for Ongwen lists seven counts of alleged individual criminal responsibility including

crimes against humanity, enslavement, murder and inhumane acts of inflicting serious bodily injury.

There was no immediate word on what the Americans had done with Ongwen.

In 2005, the Ugandan military had announced him dead but in 2006 the ICC reported that the genetic fingerprinting confirmed it was not Ongwen.

Ongwen, LRA leader Joseph Kony and three others who have reportedly since died were charged by the ICC. In Washington, the Obama administration said Tuesday, saying the defection could be a "historic blow" to Kony's nearly three-decade rebellion.

The man surrendered to U.S. military personnel in the Central African Republic, where they are helping African troops hunt for Kony and his fighters, State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said in Washington on Tuesday. □

Cuban dissident says he believes 2 on US list are freed

ANDREA RODRIGUEZ

Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) —

Two young Cuban political prisoners were freed Wednesday, and a leading human rights advocate said he believed their liberation was part of a U.S.-Cuban deal to release 53 dissidents.

The head of Cuba's Human Rights and Reconciliation Commission, Elizardo Sanchez, told The Associated Press that 19-year-old twins Diango Vargas Martin

and Bianco Vargas Martin were released without any of the judicial procedures that normally precede the liberation of those held in politically related cases.

According to Amnesty International,

the brothers were arrested in December 2012 as they tried to return to their home, where they lived with their mother, a member of the dissident group Ladies in White. They had been held on charges of

using violence or intimidation against a state official. Amnesty described them as prisoners of conscience. U.S. officials said last month that Cuba agreed to free 53 people considered by Washington to be political prisoners who it wanted freed as part of negotiations to restore full diplomatic relations.

Since then, neither Cuba nor the United States has publicly give out any of the names on the list and

no releases have been announced, prompting swelling criticism in the U.S. of the deal between Presidents Barack Obama and Raul Castro.

Francisco "Pepe" Hernandez, president of the Cuban American National Foundation, said he had been informed by the White House that Lady in White member Sonia Garro, her husband and a neighbor had been let go as part of the deal prior to

both governments' Dec. 17 announcement of warming relations.

Sanchez said he had no official confirmation that the Vargas Martin brothers were on the list of 53 prisoners, but the facts of their release led him to believe their release was part of the U.S.-Cuba deal.

"They're prisoners of conscience and they've been freed immediately and with no conditions," he said. □



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Venezuela's Maduro in China seeking aid for stricken economy

BEIJING (AP) — Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro met Thursday with Chinese leader Xi Jinping amid hopes for new loans to bolster the South American nation's stricken economy.

Xi reiterated the importance of relations during talks between the two leaders at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, saying the two countries enjoyed a "cooperative strategic partnership" and would deepen co-operation in all areas. There was no immediate word on new Chinese loans.

But after the meeting, the third between the two leaders since Maduro took power in 2013, the Venezuelan president said that during the trip, his government had drummed up Chinese investments in energy, technology and infrastructure projects worth \$20 billion.

"Sometimes there's a conspiracy to try and make the world see Venezuela as bankrupt," Maduro told journalists, highlighting the investments as a show of confidence in the country's socialist revolution. "Venezuela is an economic power in its own right, with a productive population and giant potential."

China is Venezuela's largest creditor and has loaned it more than \$40 billion over the past five years, some of which has been paid back in the form of oil deliveries. While Beijing is eager to keep relations healthy, it may become reluctant to continue lending the South American country large sums if prospects for repayment dim.



Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro, right, walks with Chinese President Xi Jinping during a welcome ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2015. (AP Photo/Andy Wong)

Maduro traveled to China on Sunday along with the presidents of Ecuador and Costa Rica for high-level talks on Chinese trade, investment and financial support in Latin America. On Tuesday, Ecuador said it secured a \$5.3 billion credit line from China's Eximbank.

China last year loosened its lending terms to Venezuela, extending a deadline for repayment and ending minimum shipment requirements. Venezuela is struggling with the world's highest inflation rate, a recession and a cash crunch worsened by a steep fall in the price of oil.

It has so far unsuccessfully urged OPEC nations to work together to drive up oil prices, which have fallen by half in six months. Venezuela depends on oil for 95 percent of its export income. □

French fry fury continues in Venezuela

HANNAH DREIER

Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela

(AP) — McDonald's is finding itself under attack in Venezuela both for not selling french fries — and for selling them.

Hours after The Associated Press reported Tuesday that McDonald's had run out of fries at Venezuelan franchises, state-sponsored television network Telesur posted a story headlined "McDonald's Joins Economic War against Venezuela."

Industry experts say McDonald's has had to turn to local alternatives like fried yuca root and are-

pa flatbreads because of the economic chaos wracking the South American country. The restaurant's franchise operator had actually avoided blaming the deep-fried potato famine on the government, saying a U.S. labor dispute was the reason. But officials of Venezuela's socialist government and its supporters are taking a combative attitude. President Nicolas Maduro retweeted a story about a tooth being found in an order of McDonald's french fries in Japan.

The influential pro-government website Apore covered its home

page in articles critical of the restaurant chain. One post cautioned readers to consider what kind of toxins might be lurking in the ingredient list of fries. Another warned that plastic shards had been found amid the chain's beloved chicken nuggets.

Venezuela's socialist administration has never sat easily with the fast food giant, a symbol the world over of U.S. capitalism. The late President Hugo Chavez twice closed nearly all McDonald's in the country as a temporary punishment for alleged tax dodging.

Last year, the government, which has imposed price caps on everything from milk to children's toys, successfully pressured McDonald's to cut the cost of a Big Mac combo meal. Dante Rivas, the government official in charge of Venezuela's permitting process, posted a photo to Twitter that showed a man becoming fat and unhealthy from eating McDonald's burgers. He said he was glad the chain had run out of fries.

"I welcome the turbulence. Now we will eat fried yuca, 100% made in Venezuela," he wrote. □

Argentina: Blame game over tampon shortage

ALMUDENA CALATRAVA

Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — A shortage of tampons in Argentina has turned demand for one of the most personal of personal hygiene products into a public debate over what is stopping the flow of products to store shelves. Government officials and product importers tossed blame at one another Wednesday, with Argentina insinuating that busi-

nesses are trying to drive up prices. Speaking to reporters, Cabinet chief Jorge Capitanich said there were no special restrictions on importing tampons, which he called "sensitive products," and blamed the shortage on a commercial "strategy" by importers. But Miguel Ponce, head of the Chamber of Importers, blamed government regulations. In general, he said authorities have been particularly slow to issue import permits for several products. Also, some companies have had trouble getting access to foreign currency, he said. In recent months, Argentina has tightened its already strict control on foreign currencies in an attempt to curb inflation and capital flight. The government

hopes that by restricting currency exchanges it will protect reserves at home needed to pay off its debts. That has often made it hard for importers to get the funds they need to buy products abroad. The restrictions on imports, combined with high inflation in South America's second-largest economy, have led to periodic shortages of pharmaceutical products in recent years, such as latex gloves and needles. southeast of Buenos Aires. "I was looking for three days," Perez said Wednesday while shopping at a Buenos Aires pharmacy that did not have any tampons in stock. "Luckily, my sister, who was there, saved me. She had some that I brought back to Buenos Aires." Argentina imports most tampons from neighboring Brazil, said Ponce, the head of the importers chamber. He said it would take a few



Tampons are displayed on a shelf at a drug store in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2015. A shortage of tampons in several Argentine cities led to finger-pointing Wednesday, with the government insinuating it was a strategy by importers to jack up prices while companies blamed stifling bureaucracy. The shelves in pharmacies and supermarkets have even been empty in some coastal areas where tourists flock during the warm summer months.

(AP Photo/Natasha Pisarenko)

Tampons have become scarce the last two weeks. Store shelves that normally stock tampons have been stripped bare in some coastal areas where tourists flock during South America's warm summer months. Marcelo Yarmaian, a spokesman for Johnson & Johnson, one of the main providers of tampons in Argentina, told the country's official news agency Telam that the shortages mainly affected boxes of the most popular sizes and quantities, not tampons overall. The company said it was working with distributors to make sure "the product is available on the shelves shortly." Daniela Perez, 30, said she could not find tampons when she was vacationing during New Year's in La Lucila del Mar, a coastal city 222 miles (358 kilometers)

weeks for the situation to normalize, in part because of panic buying. "People see the news, get alarmed, and then go out and stock up," he told news site Infobae. In recent days, Twitter has exploded with jokes and complaints about the shortage. Some said Argentina was becoming more like Cuba and Venezuela, where hygiene products frequently are hard to find. Claudio Guerschuny, a Buenos Aires pharmacist, told television channel Todo Noticias that in addition to tampons there is a shortage of adult diapers and children's swim diapers. "We don't have a single tampon," she said. "Drug stores don't have answers and they also have not gotten any answers" from the government. □

Venezuelan schoolbooks teach sciences, socialism

HANNAH DREIER

Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Students here study math by calculating the benefits of government land takeovers. They practice English by reciting where late President Hugo Chavez was born and learn civics by explaining why the elderly should give him thanks. Pro-administration messages scattered through the pages of Venezuela's textbooks have become yet another point of conflict in this hyper-polarized country, where Chavez's socialist party won a bare majority in the presidential elections of 2013.

Parents recently tossed books into the streets in front of some schools and burned them, acts the loyalist media compared to censorship by the Nazis in 1930s Germany. As children head back to school after winter break, many Venezuelans remain outraged over texts that treat the founder of a deeply divisive socialist revolution with the sort of reverence U.S. textbooks reserve for George Washington.

Math lessons include calculations of how much production has increased as a result of the government's agrarian reform initiative, and how much land the government still has to reclaim from private owners. Students are asked to figure out how much shoppers save at government-subsidized appliance stores created by Chavez.

Learning English? Answer the question, "Where was Hugo Chavez born?"

"They are brainwashing our kids, erasing our nation's history, and replacing it with their own version," said information technology worker Hector Cuevas, who was appalled when his son brought home the books as a sixth-grader.

For defenders, the "Bolivarian" textbooks introduced in 2011 include history traditionally left out of grade school education, and tie lessons to real-life examples in socialist Venezuela.

Minister of Education Hector Rodriguez defended the books this fall, and also urged critics to work with the government to improve the collection.

"Certainly they can be improved, like any human endeavor," he said, according to Venezuelan news website Noticias24. "Those who want to criticize should read the books, and when they find an error they should let us know to correct it."

But for opponents, the problem is not errors so much as what they see as attacks on government foes and propaganda for controversial programs.

An early edition of the government's social studies book shows a photo of an elderly person writing, "Thanks, Chavez" and instructs students to explain why.

One book interrupts an explanation of fractions to praise a food program "developed by the Bolivarian government to ensure that the poor can eat."

While all students receive the books, they are in widest use in poor areas, where they are often the only option for teachers. At Consuelo Navas Tovar high school at the fringes of one of Caracas' sprawling slums, students in navy blue uniforms study their English textbooks at grimy desks crammed into a bare-walled classroom. The book has students discuss a study hall sponsored by a government agency known by an arcane acronym.

"It's a project of FUNDABIT!" one student is told to say. "That is excellent!" the partner replies. Geometry professor Tomas Guardia of Central University of Venezuela has spent months documenting what he and his colleagues call basic errors in math books. □



Island Visitors Honored for Their Loyalty to Aruba!



PALM BEACH - Recently Aruba Tourism Authority had the great pleasure of honoring a large group of devoted visitors as Distinguished Visitors and Goodwill Ambassadors of Aruba.

The symbolic honorary titles are presented in the name of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation to guests who visit Aruba for between 10-to-19 and 20-or-more consecutive years.

Ms. Darline S. de Cuba representing Aruba Tourism Authority, together with Mr. Reginald Amaya of the Paradise Beach Villas honored the special island guests with well-deserved plaques and certificates. The honorees include Family Griffith of Canada, Family Sechrist of Pennsylvania, Family Banyai, also of Canada, and Family Truhon of New York. They all love returning to



Aruba because the island is like a second home to them. They have all been visiting the island for the past years with much devotion and warm feelings. They all enjoy the warm inviting sun, the gracious treatment from everyone,

the absolute feeling of safety everywhere/anytime, the unending selection of restaurants, and the abundance of shopping from flea markets to elegance! Congratulations to the Happy Families! □

Divi Resorts Hosts Great Gatsby Holiday Celebration!



joyed the entire evening. The theme for the party was "Great Gatsby" and during the evening Employees and Supervisors of the Year 2014 were honored. Congratulations to all the nominees and the winners for the different categories. Thank you to the Human Resources Department for organizing this wonderful event. A special thanks to the following people who contributed to the party: Classic Cars Commission: Philippe and Igor, Tsunami for their wonderful performance during the whole



ORANJESTAD - The Divi Resorts family, including Divi, Tamarijn, The Divi/Dutch Village, Divi Golf, Divi Phoenix, Phoenix Sales, Dal Time and Divi Aruba Sales Consultants celebrated their wonderful Christmas Party on at the Renaissance Convention Center. Divi Resorts have over 1,000 employees in the tourism sector and surely wanted to demonstrate their appreciation and thank them for their good work during the entire year. The success of the companies is thanks



to the service and friendliness of the employees. The employees greatly en-

joyed the entire evening. The theme for the party was "Great Gatsby" and during the evening Employees and Supervisors of the Year 2014 were honored. Congratulations to all the nominees and the winners for the different categories. Thank you to the Human Resources Department for organizing this wonderful event. A special thanks to the following people who contributed to the party: Classic Cars Commission: Philippe and Igor, Tsunami for their wonderful performance during the whole

to the winners that night. On behalf of the Management and staff of the Divi Resorts we want to wish all

employees and the community of Aruba a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! ☐



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PALM BEACH - Piano bar entertainer Greg Asadoorian is performing in Aruba through February 28 at The Sopranos Piano Bar at Arawak Gardens, J.E. Irausquin 368.

A professional piano bar entertainer for 10 years, Greg Asadoorian delivers an energetic rock 'n' roll show that gets the audience into the act. With accents of harmonica and percussion to his dexterous



piano playing and versatile vocals, Greg is a true one-man band. In addition to a repertoire of crowd favor-

ites, he also offers an R-rated, adults-only late night show. Greg has enjoyed playing all over his native

New England and was ranked among the highest rated piano bar entertainers during a five-year stint

with Carnival Cruise Lines. He performs Sunday through Friday from 8pm to 1am. □



A dejected Florida State quarterback Jameis Winston (5) walks on the sideline during the second half of the Rose Bowl NCAA college football playoff semifinal against Oregon, Thursday, Jan. 1, 2015, in Pasadena, Calif.

Associated Press

Florida State's Jameis Winston will enter NFL draft

By KAREEM COPELAND

Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP)

-- Florida State quarterback Jameis Winston announced that he is going to the NFL on the same day the woman who accused him of sexual assault filed a lawsuit against the school's board of trustees.

The 2013 Heisman Trophy winner announced his decision to forgo his final two years of eligibility and enter the 2015 draft in a statement released to ESPN by The Legacy Agency Wednesday.

Winston was the most successful quarterback in college football during the last two seasons, but also faced lengthy sexual assault investigations. He was not charged by police and was cleared by the university.

In a lawsuit filed against the school's board of trustees, the woman who accused him of sexual assault claimed the board had an unreasonable response to her accusations and created a hostile educational environment for her.

Continued on Next Page



Off THE WALL

Knicks set record with 13th straight loss

Washington Wizards guard John Wall (2) dunks behind his head in the first half of an NBA basketball game against the New York Knicks on Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2015, in Washington. Associated Press

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Jameis Winston

Continued from Previous Page

The lawsuit seeks unspecified damages.

A Florida State spokeswoman did not respond to a message left at her office. Representatives for the woman declined comment. The Seminoles went 26-1 with Winston starting and won the 2014 national championship.

"I reached this very difficult decision after careful consideration and long thought, realizing how difficult it would be to say goodbye to my family at Florida State," Winston said. "I will always take pride in leading our team back to national prominence and am confident that my returning teammates will continue the success for many years to come."

Winston set the national freshman record with 40 touchdown passes while throwing for 4,057 yards and 10 interceptions en route to winning the title. His numbers dropped in 2013 after losing his top two running backs, two starting receivers and his starting center. Winston threw for 3,907 yards with 25 touchdowns and 18 interceptions in 2014.

Winston is expected to be one of the first quarterbacks selected, but faces questions about his off-field incidents.

NFL Media senior analyst Gil Brandt said NFL teams will find out everything they need to know about Win-



In this Jan. 1, 2015 file photo, Florida State quarterback Jameis Winston passes against Oregon during the first half of the Rose Bowl NCAA college football playoff semifinal, in Pasadena, Calif.

Associated Press

ston's background from league security. Brandt helped build the Super Bowl-winning Dallas Cowboys as vice president of player personnel from 1960-89.

"Initially, he's going to get a grade and it's going to be very good because he is a good player," Brandt said. "They'll look at the Notre Dame game and see all

the unusual blitzes that they brought against him and what he did. They'll look at the Louisville game where he threw three interceptions and knocks the ball loose from the interceptor and throws a touchdown pass the next play.

"The way he's played this year is unbelievable with all of the problems that he's faced and all the adjust-

ments he's had to make to practice times and to do all the things that he has to do to defend himself, give depositions, appear in court before the student body, all of those things."

A state attorney declined to press sexual assault charges against Winston in December 2013. The university cleared him in December 2014.

Winston was suspended three baseball games for the theft of crab legs from a Tallahassee, Florida, grocery store during the spring of 2014. He was also suspended from the Clemson football game in September after the quarterback made "offensive and vulgar" comments about female anatomy on campus. □

Unsung Cowboys defensive standout Jethro Pugh dead at 70

By **SCHUYLER DIXON**
AP Sports Writer

IRVING, Texas (AP) - Jethro Pugh played alongside Hall of Famers Bob Lilly and Randy White in a long career as a defensive tackle for the Dallas Cowboys, which may explain why he was among the most unsung Super Bowl winners in the franchise's storied history. Pugh, who played in the first four Super Bowls for Dallas and was part of a "Doomsday Defense" that won two of them, died Wednesday. He was 70.

The team said Pugh died of natural causes four days before the Cowboys were to play their first postseason game in Green Bay since the famous Ice Bowl in 1967. Pugh and Lilly were side-by-side in sub-zero temperatures in a 21-17 Dallas loss that sent the Packers to a second straight title at the start of the Super Bowl era with a victory over Oakland.

"He was a terribly unsung person among that bunch of great players he had," said Gil Brandt, who was the

personnel director when the Cowboys drafted Pugh in the 11th round in 1965. Pugh was the first Dallas player to lead the team in sacks five straight seasons (1968-72). DeMarcus Ware, the franchise sacks leader, was the only other to do it. Pugh is fifth on the team's career list with 99 1/2 sacks. Brandt said Pugh was a 20-year-old graduate of Elizabeth City State in North Carolina when Dallas drafted him. He became a starter the year of the Ice Bowl and started his five-year

streak of leading the team in sacks a year later.

Pugh played on Dallas teams that beat Miami and Denver in the Super Bowl after the 1971 and 1977 seasons. He was on teams that lost to Baltimore and Pittsburgh.

The final season for Pugh was 1978, when he played in 13 regular-season games but missed the playoffs, including a loss to Pittsburgh in the Super Bowl.

"He would have been a top 10-type player in the draft today," Brandt said.

"He was big, long arms, very athletic, very fast. Just a great competitor. Smart. He was well beyond his years."

Pugh never made the Pro Bowl in 14 seasons, while teammates Lilly, White, Mel Renfro, Cliff Harris and Chuck Howley combined for 42 all-star appearances. Pugh was second-team All-Pro in 1968.

After football, Pugh had a successful career as a businessman through a company that runs airport concessions. □

Elias reaches 1,000 points as Devils win

The Associated Press

NEWARK, New Jersey (AP)

— Patrik Elias had a goal and two assists to reach 1,000, NHL points, and the New Jersey Devils beat the struggling Buffalo Sabres 4-1 on Tuesday night. The goal was the 399th for Elias.

Travis Zajac and Michael Cammalleri each had a goal and an assist. And Jordin Tootoo also scored as the Devils won consecutive games for the first time since Nov. 14.

Cory Schneider made 20 saves.

Mikhail Grigorenko netted his first goal of the season for the Sabres, who have lost five straight and are 1-8-1 in their last 10 games. The Devils dominated the first period, jumping out to a 3-0 lead and outshooting the Sabres 13-4. Elias had a goal and an assist in the frame.

LIGHTNING 4, CANADIENS 2 MONTREAL (AP) — Tyler Johnson scored twice in Tampa Bay's four-goal second period, and the Lightning won the matchup for the top spot in Eastern Conference by beating Montreal.

Brett Connolly and J.T. Brown also scored for Tampa Bay (26-12-4), which moved two points ahead of Montreal atop both the

Atlantic Division and the Eastern Conference.

Dale Weise and Max Pacioretty had goals for Montreal (26-12-2), which has two games in hand on the Lightning.

The Canadiens played their first home game since Dec. 20 after winning five straight on the road. They had won six in a row overall.

FLYERS 2, SENATORS 1, SO PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Wayne Simmonds scored the tying goal in regulation and had the winner in the shootout to lift Philadelphia over Ottawa.

Ottawa's Mika Zibanejad and Philadelphia's Jake Voracek each scored on the opening shots of the tiebreaker.

Neither team scored in the next three rounds. Simmonds then punched in the winner against Craig Anderson to give the Flyers their first shootout victory in six tries this season. The Flyers had lost 10 straight shootouts overall.

Mike Hoffman faked out defenseman Mark Streit and put a shot past Steve Mason to give Ottawa a 1-0 lead 6:36 into the third period.

Simmonds scored his 16th goal just 1:23 later, this one from Streit and Claude Giroux on the power play.

The Senators outshot the

Flyers 42-34 through overtime.

PREDATORS 3, HURRICANES 2

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Roman Josi scored the tie-breaking goal late in the third period to give Nashville a victory over Carolina. Ryan Ellis and Mike Fisher also scored, and Pekka Rinne stopped 23 shots to help Nashville win for the third time in four games. Viktor Stalberg had two assists.

Eric Staal and Justin Faulk scored for Carolina and Cam Ward also made 23 saves for the Hurricanes, who had won two straight. With the score tied at 2, Stalberg sent a pass from the right side to Josi in the high slot. Josi corralled the puck and fired a slap shot past Ward with 4:43 remaining to give the Predators their only lead.

SHARKS 4, WILD 3, OT ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — Marc-Edouard Vlasic scored his second winning goal in two nights 3:09 into overtime, and San Jose completed a come-from-behind victory over Minnesota.

Vlasic, who scored the winner with 4.5 seconds left in regulation on Monday at Winnipeg, beat goalie Darcy Kuemper with a wrist shot from just outside the



Tampa Bay Lightning's Brett Connolly celebrates his goal against Montreal Canadiens goalie Carey Price during the second period of an NHL hockey game Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2015, in Montreal. Associated Press

left circle.

Joe Pavelski and Tommy Wingels scored 1:14 apart to give San Jose a 3-2 lead at 7:35 of the third period. Minnesota's Jason Zucker tipped in a pass from Charlie Coyle at 12:12 for his second goal of the game, tying it 3-3 and temporarily helping the Wild regain momentum.

Wild forward Zach Parise missed the game to be with his ailing father — former player J.P. Parise —

who has lung cancer.

AVALANCHE 2, BLACK-HAWKS 0

CHICAGO (AP) — Nathan MacKinnon scored and set up a goal by Maxime Talbot in the opening 1:17, Semyon Varlamov made 54 saves for his third shutout of the season and Colorado blanked Chicago. Colorado was outshot by 30 but held on for its third win in four games behind Varlamov's 16th NHL shutout. □

Rodgers sits out Packers practice, still expected to start

By GENARO C. ARMAS AP Sports Writer

GREEN BAY, Wis. (AP) --

Aaron Rodgers didn't practice Wednesday because of a lingering left calf injury. The quarterback left no doubt about his plans for Sunday when the Green Bay Packers host the Dallas Cowboys.

"No, I'm going Sunday," Rodgers said. "Just a matter of how."

Missing practice was part of the plan for Rodgers, who has dealt with the injury for about three weeks. While the Packers practiced inside the frigid Hutson Center training facility,

Rodgers stayed exclusively in the training room for treatment.

He hopes that occasional acupuncture will also help, along with the valuable rest that the Packers received for earning a bye for the opening round of the playoffs.

It's possible Rodgers could also wear a wrap to further protect his lower left leg.

There is progress, though "it's never enough for Aaron," coach Mike McCarthy said. "But I think the training staff feels good about it and we feel confident in the direction we're going."

Rodgers at less than 100



In this Dec. 28, 2014 photo, Detroit Lions defensive tackle Ndamukong Suh steps on the leg of Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers (12) during the fourth quarter of an NFL football game in Green Bay, Wis. Associated Press

percent health is still better than most other quarterbacks.

Two weeks ago against

Detroit, Rodgers had to be carted to the locker room after aggravating the calf injury.

He limped back on to the field in the middle of the third quarter, throwing for one score and tumbling in from 1 yard for another to help lead the Packers to victory and a fourth straight NFC North crown. Rodgers is such a stickler for preparation that no one in the locker room doubts the team's leader can play well without practice.

"We would definitely love to be able to have that preparation, but health is the most important thing for him at this time. You've got to trust the system," receiver Randall Cobb said. □

Steven Gerrard joining LA Galaxy from Liverpool

GREG BEACHAM

AP Sports Writer

CARSON, Calif. (AP) — Steven Gerrard is the next big star in the LA Galaxy.

The Liverpool captain will join the defending Major League Soccer champions in July after completing his illustrious career with his boyhood team, the Galaxy announced Wednesday.

The 34-year-old midfielder said last week he was leaving Liverpool after the English Premier League season to move stateside. The Galaxy confirmed Gerrard's move to Southern California on an 18-month deal as a designated player, which means he will be paid above MLS' salary cap.

"The Galaxy are the most successful club in Major League Soccer history, and I am looking forward to competing for more championships in the years to come," Gerrard said in a statement released by the club.

The MLS season begins in March, meaning Gerrard won't team up with league MVP Robbie Keane until midway through the schedule.

The move is the latest bold stroke for the Galaxy, who won the MLS Cup in De-



This is a Tuesday, Dec. 2, 2014 file photo of Liverpool's Steven Gerrard as he celebrates scoring against Leicester during the English Premier League soccer match between Leicester City and Liverpool at King Power Stadium, in Leicester, England.

Associated Press

cember for the third time in four years and the record fifth time overall.

As a versatile midfielder with tremendous finishing ability and leadership skills, Gerrard seems to be an ideal replacement for Landon Donovan, a Galaxy star for the last 10 seasons who briefly played at Everton. The most accomplished player in U.S. soccer history retired last month at 32 years old, worn down by the competitive grind.

Gerrard and Keane are both two years older than

Donovan, but their partnership is just getting started.

"I think in the dressing room, he is going to bring qualities we haven't seen before," Galaxy coach Bruce Arena said. "I think Stevie's qualities as a person and a leader (are) outstanding. On the field, he is obviously going to be different than Landon Donovan. The idea is that he is not here to replace Landon Donovan. He is a great addition to our team, a player of quality and experience, and I think he is going to complement

the group of players that we have rather well."

Arena envisions Gerrard in more of an attacking role in the Galaxy midfield, teaming with Keane and young striker Gyasi Zardes.

"I think we add another piece to our team that hopefully will allow us to maintain our status in the league," Arena said.

Indeed, Galaxy owner Phil Anschutz doesn't hesitate to spend to the limits of the league's salary constraints for the best available players. The club changed MLS' worldwide perception in 2007 when it signed David Beckham for his trailblazing six-year run with the club, ending in 2012 with two straight championships.

Arena has repeatedly attracted top talent to sun-splashed Hollywood, building a dynasty in a league devoted to parity. Gerrard will join Keane and U.S. national team defender Omar Gonzalez as the Galaxy's three designated players, surrounded by a solid group of complementary talent.

"The future of the team is very bright," Gerrard said. Keane and Gerrard are reunited in what should be a potent offensive pairing.

They were teammates with Liverpool from 2008-09. Keane, who grew up as a Liverpool fan in Dublin, spent just 19 games with the Merseyside club before Tottenham reacquired him.

Keane, who has been an MLS standout ever since joining the Galaxy past midseason in 2011, immediately put a post on his Facebook page welcoming "Stevie G."

"Great player and a great addition to the team," Keane posted. "Here's to 2015 season and hopefully another title."

Gerrard has been a staple in Liverpool's midfield for 17 years and its full-time captain since 2003, a remarkable run of consistency in European soccer.

The Reds' longest-serving captain has scored 182 goals in 696 appearances in all competitions while winning 10 major trophies in the last 15 years, including the UEFA Champions League in 2005 and the FA Cup in 2001 and 2006.

Gerrard also served as England's captain during the last two World Cups. He has 21 goals in 114 international appearances — third-most in English history.

Gerrard is the second high-



Washington Wizards guard John Wall (2) splits between New York Knicks forward Cleanthony Early (17) and guard Jose Calderon (3), from Spain, during the second half of an NBA basketball game, Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2015, in Washington. The Wizards won 101-91.

Associated Press

By JOSEPH WHITE

AP Sports Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) -- The New York Knicks' deconstruction project hit a new low Wednesday night with a 101-91 loss to the Wash-

ington Wizards, setting a record for longest in-season losing streak in the proud franchise's 69-year history. The defeat was the Knicks' 13th in a row, surpassing the mark set at the end of

Knicks set record with 13th straight loss, 101-91 to Wizards

the 1984-85 season, and their 23rd in 24 games. It featured all the now-familiar follies and a few new ones: passes that went nowhere, shots that became bricks, and Tim Hardaway Jr.'s bizarre decision to pass the ball away from the basket when he had a two-on-one fast break right in front of him. John Wall had 18 points and eight assists for the Wizards, who avoided slipping in an obvious trap game after a tough five-game road trip.

Jose Calderon scored 17 points for the Knicks, whose roster requires a flow chart these days just to keep up. Carmelo Anthony (sore left knee) and Amare Stoudemire (sore right knee)

remain sidelined. J.R. Smith and Iman Shumpert have been traded away. Langston Galloway, signed to a 10-day contract earlier in the day, played 18 minutes. Team president Phil Jackson is mostly concerned with clearing salary cap space for the future.

The clearly outmatched underdogs hung around for a few minutes until a 9-0 Washington run late in the first quarter. The Wizards never really put the Knicks away, but there was never a sense that they were danger of losing, and Rasual Butler's back-to-back baskets midway through the fourth quarter quieted any and all concerns after New York cut the deficit to

five.

First-year coach Derek Fisher said before the game he wasn't aware his team was on the verge of a dubious achievement. "This franchise has been around long before I was even born, so we can't carry that much weight into a game like tonight," Fisher said. "There's a lot of guys in this locker room that weren't alive barely 20 years ago, so it's just about our team and what it is that we're trying to do. 'We don't like our record, where it falls in franchise history. I guess it would be a reality possibly depending on how the night goes tonight, but that doesn't have to define us at all."

Pedro Martinez memoir coming out in May

NEW YORK (AP) — It's a year for the books for Pedro Martinez, who was voted into the Baseball Hall of Fame this week: Now the pitcher has a memoir coming out in May. The book was first acquired in 2013 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, which on Wednesday announced that the release date for "Pedro" was May 5. Martinez, widely regarded as

one of the greatest pitchers of his generation, received three Cy Young Awards and won more than 200 games.

"Pedro," written with Michael Silverman of the Boston Herald, follows Martinez from his "hardscrabble upbringing" in the Dominican Republic to his triumphant years with the Boston Red Sox and other teams.



National Baseball Hall of Fame inductee Pedro Martinez shows how his finger flexibility allowed him to become a prominent pitcher in Major League Baseball while being interviewed during a taping of a show at the MLB Network's Studio 42 following a press conference showcasing the 2015 hall of fame class, Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2015, in Secaucus, N.J. Associated Press

NBA Capsules

Pistons rally in final seconds to 105-104 win over Spurs

The Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Detroit scored four points in the final 11 seconds, rallying for a 105-104 victory over the San Antonio Spurs on Tuesday.

With just eight seconds left, Brandon Jennings collected an errant inbound pass and drove the length of the court for the winning basket with 0.1 seconds remaining.

Andre Drummond had 20 points and 17 rebounds and Greg Monroe added 17 points and 11 rebounds as the Pistons pushed their winning streak to six games. Drummond and Monroe dominated the inside, but it was Jennings who punctuated that effort for the Pistons (11-23).

San Antonio point guard Tony Parker played just 13 minutes in his return from a five-game absence due to a strained left hamstring. SUNS 102, BUCKS 96

MILWAUKEE (AP) — Markieff Morris scored 26 points and grabbed 10 rebounds to lead the Phoenix Suns to the win.

Isaiah Thomas added 19



Detroit Pistons' Brandon Jennings (7) celebrates after he scored the game-winning shot against the San Antonio Spurs during the second half of an NBA basketball game, Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2015, in San Antonio. Detroit won 105-104.

Associated Press

and Goran Dragic 16 for the Suns, who have scored a 100 or more points for nine straight games.

Brandon Knight scored 26 and Giannis Antetokounmpo added 16 for the Bucks, who lost their fourth

straight at home.

The Suns have won nine of the last 11 and opened the four-game road trip with their third consecutive victory. They also upped their record to 8-1 over Eastern Conference opponents.



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LIAM NEESON | FOREST WHITAKER

TAK3N

MON-THUR 4:35 | 7:00 | 9:25
FRI 4:35 | 7:00 | 9:25 | 12:10
SAT 2:10 | 4:35 | 7:00 | 9:25 | 12:10
SUN & HOL 2:10 | 4:35 | 7:00 | 9:25

PG-13

ON TWO SCREENS



ANNA KENDRICK | MERYL STREEP

Disney
INTO THE WOODS

MON-THUR 3:55 | 6:35 | 9:15
FRI 3:55 | 6:35 | 9:15
SAT 2:00 | 3:55 | 6:35 | 9:15 | 11:45
SUN & HOL 2:00 | 3:55 | 6:35 | 9:15 | 11:45

PG



HELEN MCCRORY | JEREMY IRVINE

THE WOMAN IN BLACK 2
ANGEL OF DEATH

MON-THUR 5:05 | 7:20 | 9:35
FRI 5:05 | 7:20 | 9:35 | 11:50
SAT 2:50 | 5:05 | 7:20 | 9:35 | 11:50
SUN & HOL 2:50 | 5:05 | 7:20 | 9:35

PG-13



MARK WAHLBERG | JESSICA LANGE

THE GAMBLER

MON-THUR 7:00 | 9:30
FRI 7:00 | 9:30 | 12:00
SAT 7:00 | 9:30 | 12:00
SUN & HOL 7:00 | 9:30

R

BEN STILLER | ROBIN WILLIAMS

NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
SECRET OF THE TOMB

MON-THUR 4:40 | 7:00 | 9:20
FRI 4:40 | 7:00 | 9:20 | 11:40
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SUN & HOL 4:40 | 7:00 | 9:20

PG

QUENZHANÉ WALLIS | JAIME FOXX

Annie
WITH SPANISH SUBTITLES

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FRI 4:00 | 6:35 | 9:10
SAT 2:00 | 4:00 | 6:35 | 9:10
SUN & HOL 2:00 | 4:00 | 6:35 | 9:10

PG

TOM MCGRATH | CHRIS MILLER

PENGUINS
of MADAGASCAR

MON-THUR 5:20
FRI 5:20
SAT 3:10 | 5:20
SUN & HOL 3:10 | 5:20

PG

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Djokovic eases into Qatar Open quarterfinals

SANDRA HARWITT

Associated Press

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — Top-seeded Novak Djokovic celebrated Serbian Orthodox Christmas by beating Sergiy Stakhovsky of Ukraine 6-2, 6-1 in the second round of the Qatar Open on Wednesday.

Djokovic, who also won his doubles match with Serbian partner Filip Krajcinovic, needed only 61 minutes to bypass Stakhovsky and move into the quarterfinals.

"Yes,

Orthodox Christmas. It's the biggest holiday that we have," Djokovic said. "Obviously not a holiday for me. I'm working on the court. But it's a big day. So I'm really glad that I was able to perform well and get two wins on this day."

Djokovic, who is playing at the Qatar Open for the first time, won 29 of 34 points when his first serve went in and saved all three break points he faced against Stakhovsky. He next plays



Novak Djokovic of Serbia returns the ball to Sergiy Stakhovsky of the Ukraine during the Qatar ATP Open Tennis tournament in Doha, Qatar, Wednesday Jan. 7, 2015.

Associated Press

seventh-seeded Ivo Karlovic, who beat qualifier Nikoloz Basiasvili of Georgia 7-6 (3), 6-3.

Karlovic became one of three men in tennis history to surpass the 9,000 aces

mark earlier this week — he now has 9,041. It's an ability that makes him a tricky challenge for opponents.

"I'm definitely going to try to get some good sleep so my reaction tomorrow is

quick, because I'm going to need that, definitely," Djokovic said. "Honestly, I'm still to meet a player who enjoys playing him."

There won't be a singles match between Djokovic and Rafael Nadal at this year's tournament after the Spaniard was upset in the first round.

But the two will face each other in doubles on Thursday, after Nadal and Juan Monaco of Argentina also moved into the doubles semifinals.

"It's going to be interesting to play against each other in doubles, which is not the common case for us, but I look forward to that," said Djokovic.

Third-seeded Tomas Berdych of the Czech Republic brushed aside Slovakian qualifier Blaz Kavcic 6-1, 6-2 to reach the quarterfinals.

Berdych is showing top form this week. In two matches played, he's yet to offer an opponent a break point

opportunity.

He now faces sixth-seeded Richard Gasquet, who defeated Simone Bolelli of Italy 6-3, 6-2.

David Ferrer, seeded fourth, won an all-Spanish battle against Fernando Verdasco 6-3, 6-2.

Ferrer, who led Verdasco 5-0 in the second set, was unable to take advantage of one match point on Verdasco's serve in the sixth game, and two match points on his own serve in the seventh game.

He finally won the match on a fourth match point at 30-40 on Verdasco's serve in the eighth game.

Ferrer will play Dustin Brown of Germany, who posted a 7-6 (9), 6-4 win over compatriot Jan-Lennard Struff.

Andre Seppi of Italy and Ivan Dodig of Croatia will compete in the other quarterfinal.

Dodig knocked out Michael Berrer 7-6 (1), 6-2, while Seppi defeated Joao Souza of Brazil 7-5, 6-2. □



Kei Nishikori of Japan plays a shot in his match against Steve Johnson of the U.S. during the Brisbane International tennis tournament in Brisbane, Australia, Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2015.

Associated Press

JOHN PYE

AP Sports Writer

BRISBANE, Australia (AP)

— Kei Nishikori beat Steve Johnson 6-4, 7-5 at the Brisbane International on Wednesday to start a season in which he wants to be in the vanguard aiming to end the dominance of the old guard in men's tennis.

The Japanese player set Asian benchmarks during

a breakout 2014, reaching his first Grand Slam final at the U.S. Open and rising to a year-end No. 5 ranking. After a first-round bye, second-seeded Nishikori needed 80 minutes to advance from the second round in Brisbane, serving out on his fourth match point against Johnson.

He said he's feeling his way into the new year, know-

Kei Nishikori opens with a straight sets win at Brisbane

ing that expectations on him are high. The Australian Open, the first major of the season, starts in 12 days in Melbourne. Just a bit too early, he thinks, for a first Grand Slam title.

"I might need a couple more years to (become a) really good player, but I'm getting really close," he said. "So hopefully I can bring more good news to Japan."

Three players have ruled the men's game for nine years: Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic captured 34 of the 38 major titles leading into the U.S. Open last September. The four exceptions were Juan Martin del Potro at the 2009 U.S. Open, Andy Murray's wins at the 2012 U.S. Open and 2013 Wimbledon, and Stan Wawrinka's victory at the 2014 Australian Open.

None of those players reached the final at Flush-

ing Meadows, though, with Marin Cilic beating Nishikori for the title. And that sparked much hype about the future.

Nishikori, Cilic, Milos Raonic and Grigor Dimitrov are widely tipped to be among the next generation of champions.

"We are the ones coming next. We are getting really close from last year," Nishikori said. "For sure, it's going to happen this year."

Fourth-seeded Dimitrov had a more difficult opener in Brisbane, fending off two match points in the tiebreaker before beating regular practice partner Jerome Chardy of France 3-6, 6-4, 7-6 (8) in 2 ½ hours. Dimitrov saved one match point with an ace, and went ahead when Chardy fired consecutive double faults from 6-5.

"I stayed in there, stayed really positive until the end," Dimitrov said, adding

he wasn't expecting such a grueling opener, but was happy to "get straight to business."

Bernard Tomic advanced to the quarterfinals with a 7-6 (2), 6-1 victory over fellow Australian Thanasi Kokkinakis, while Martin Klizan of Slovakia beat seventh-seeded Alexandr Dolgoplov of Ukraine 1-6, 7-6 (6), 7-6 (7).

In women's singles, second-seeded Ana Ivanovic defeated Jarmila Gajdosova 6-4, 6-1 in a night match. Earlier, seventh-seeded Carla Suarez Navarro of Spain had a 5-7, 6-3, 6-4 win over Mirjana Lucic-Baroni of Croatia, and Alla Kudryavtseva of Russia beat Karolina Pliskova of Czech Republic 4-6, 6-3, 6-3.

At the ASB Classic in Auckland, New Zealand, top-seeded Caroline Wozniacki beat U.S. teenager Taylor Townsend 6-1, 7-6 (4), and Venus Williams reached

Don't sound the death knell for the PC just yet

BRANDON BAILEY

AP Technology Writer

LAS VEGAS (AP) — A year ago, pundits were declaring the personal computer dead. Smartphones and tablets were cannibalizing sales, and the once-revolutionary PC seemed unnecessary — and boring. Sure, a smartphone is great for checking emails, snapping photos and playing games. Tablets are perfect for watching videos and shopping online. But don't count the PC out just yet. Manufacturers are crafting high-resolution, curved screens for desktops and other new features you can't get in a hand-held device, while trying new laptop designs that mimic the tablet's appeal.

"For the last couple of years, mobile devices have been the hot commodity," acknowledges Dell executive Neil Hand. "But we're seeing a re-emergence of innova-



The ATIV One 7 Curved computer is on display at the Samsung booth during the International CES, Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2015, in Las Vegas. Associated Press

tion in the PC space."

For years, PC innovation consisted mostly of putting faster processors or a bigger hard drive inside the same basic box. That didn't really mat-

ter when the personal computer was a mostly unchallenged commodity. Global PC shipments peaked at more than 365 million units in 2011. But then sales fell

off dramatically as tablets stole hearts and wallets. PC sales plunged 10 percent in 2013 alone, according to research firm Gartner Inc., marking the worst annual decline in the industry's history. They slipped a little further last year, to about 314 million units. PC makers say they understand the need to evolve, and at the annual gadget show International CES in Las Vegas this week are showing off many new features aimed at wooing back consumers.

Depth-sensing cameras, for example, are popping up in high-end desktops and laptops. Intel vice president Navin Shenoy said his company's "RealSense" camera can recognize its owner's face and unlock a PC without requiring a typed password. Intel is also promoting software that uses the camera in games that respond to a player's head or hand movements.

PC makers are borrowing ideas from tablets, with laptops that are increasingly thin and lightweight, with longer battery life. Dell's new XPS 13 notebook has a screen that extends nearly to the edge of the frame, like the screen on many tablets. By eliminating wider borders, Dell says it can fit a larger screen into a smaller frame.

Several companies have hybrid or convertible devices that resemble a tablet

with a physical keyboard attached. Lenovo, the Chinese company that has become the world's biggest seller of PCs, is rolling out several new models of its Yoga hybrid, first introduced last year, with a keyboard that fully folds back so you can hold the display like a tablet. Lenovo CEO Yang Yuanqing told The Associated Press in an interview that the new "convertible" hybrids will eventually replace the laptop computer for most people, because they are lighter and have longer battery life. "Now it's only a cost issue," he said. Many of the new hybrids are priced well above \$500, while cheaper laptops are available. "We definitely should bring the cost down," he added.

ASUS on Monday announced a new series called the Transformer Book Chi, with lightweight keyboards that can detach completely by unsnapping a magnetic hinge. "Our Chi is thinner than Air," quipped ASUS CEO Jonney Shih, boasting that at 1.65 centimeters, the Chi T300 is slimmer than a MacBook Air laptop. The Transformer uses efficient new Intel processors that don't require a cooling fan, which allows for a skinnier profile. And manufacturers are experimenting with new shapes. Samsung is showing off a new all-in-one model, the ATIV One 7, with a slightly concaved, 27-inch screen that's designed to produce a more immersive experience for watching videos or playing games. Dell and HP are introducing new curved display monitors for desktops, too.

Of course, fancy features don't come cheap. Apple's new iMac, unveiled last fall, comes with a huge, ultra-high resolution, 27-inch Retina screen and equally big \$2,500 price tag, for example. For about \$1,900, you can control Hewlett-Packard's specialized machine Sprout with a touch-sensitive mat instead of a keyboard and use its sophisticated camera to scan physical objects and project the resulting image back onto the mat to incorporate into 3D printing designs. □

New SiriusXM channel to mix comedy, news

DAVID BAUDER

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The SiriusXM satellite radio network is launching a channel inspired by topical comics like Jon Stewart, Stephen Colbert and Bill Maher that seeks to attract younger listeners by bringing an entertaining twist to politics and policy discussions.

SiriusXM Insight is scheduled to begin operating Jan. 12, replacing the current channel SiriusXM Public Radio. The current channel was deemed repetitive since the service already carries National Public Radio.

"We're going to look at issues in a slightly edgier, more youthful way than traditional public radio has done in the past," said Scott Greenstein, president and chief content officer at SiriusXM.

Insight is the brainchild of current Sirius host Pete Dominick, who used to warm up the audience at "The Colbert Report." Dominick will host a three-hour

morning show at Insight. Comic John Fugelsang will have a weekday afternoon show and Muslim-American comedian Dean Obeidallah will be featured once a week.

While some comics aren't comfortable talking politics for much more than a few monologue jokes, people like Stewart and John Oliver can have intelligent discussions on serious topics, Dominick said.

"Comedians are able to get a point across and talk about issues that might be boring and make them more interesting," Dominick said. The radio shows "will be honest and really unpredictable, and I don't think 'unpredictable' is a word that Wolf Blitzer and Terry Gross get to use."

Insight will also give a platform to a variety of other commentators with different perspectives and specialties. Neil deGrasse Tyson will have a daily show merging science and pop culture. Journalist Karen

Hunter will have a two-hour nightly talk show. A rabbi will talk about Jewish issues and an expert on transcendental meditation will have a weekly show on stress relief. Republican activist Margaret Hoover will host a daily call-in show.

Hoover, the great-granddaughter of former President Herbert Hoover, leads the American Unity Fund and PAC, two organizations that promote Republicans who support gay marriage. Her husband, The Daily Beast Editor-in-Chief John Avlon, hosts his own weekly show summarizing some of that website's best stories.

Hoover said she'll try to offer a conservative perspective without being hemmed in by orthodoxy. For instance, she recently wrote a column calling for law enforcement to examine their tactics in response to concerns by black Americans, a topic she said many in her party are reluctant to address. □

Wet Seal closing 300 stores; nearly 3,700 losing jobs

ANNE D'INNOCENZIO
MICHELLE CHAPMAN
AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — Struggling teen clothing retailer Wet Seal is closing 338 stores, about two-thirds of its stores, resulting in nearly 3,700 full- and part-time workers losing their jobs. The retailer said Wednesday it decided to close the stores after reviewing its fi-

nancial condition and failing to negotiate meaningful concessions from landlords.

The closings are effective Wednesday.

The company warned Dec. 10 that it may file for bankruptcy protection if it did not resolve its cash issues after reporting another quarter of losses.

Fellow teen clothing retail-

ers Delia's Inc. and Deb Stores filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy last month, further evidence of business woes among traditional teen retailers.

Wet Seal and other chains are being hurt by stores like H&M and Forever 21 that are wooing the young with fast-changing selections of low-priced fashion. Teens are also more interested in

outfitting themselves with the latest tech gadgets than new jeans.

"This was a very difficult decision to make, but after reviewing many other options since I returned to the company in September, our financial condition leaves us no other alternative than to close these stores," CEO Ed Thomas said in a statement issued Wednesday.

Thomas came back to Wet Seal as CEO after John D. Goodman resigned from the post. Thomas previously served as president and CEO of Wet Seal from October 2007 to January 2011. Wet Seal, which was founded in 1962 and had long been a fixture at malls around the country, has struggled with an identity crisis for years.

US stocks rise, breaking a string of losses, as oil steadies

MATTHEW CRAFT
AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Encouraging economic news and a rare rise in oil prices helped give the stock market its first gain in the new year Wednesday.

Major indexes started climbing from the opening bell, following a report from ADP, the payroll processor, which showed that businesses hired more workers last month. Companies added 241,000 workers in December, an increase from the previous month.

The increase offered more evidence that the U.S. economy is on steady ground and gave investors another reason to jump back into the market after five straight days of losses, said Jeff Kravetz, regional investment director at U.S. Bank Wealth Management. All three major U.S. indexes climbed more than 1 percent. The Standard & Poor's 500 index gained 23.29 points to close at 2,025.90. The Dow Jones in-



Trader Richard Newman, left, works on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange. Encouraging economic news and a rare rise in oil prices helped give the stock market its first gain in the new year Wednesday

(AP Photo/Richard Drew)

dustrial average rose 212.88 points to 17,584.52, and the Nasdaq composite gained 57.73 points to 4,650.47.

Before Wednesday, falling oil prices and concerns

about the global economy had knocked the S&P 500 down 2.7 percent, its worst start to a year since 2008.

The recent turbulence is likely just a pause in the

stock market's steady run, said Michael Arone, chief investment strategist at State Street Global Advisors. "It's perfectly normal market activity," Arone

said. "Things tend not to go up or down in a straight line."

Major markets in Europe also ended higher for the first time this week. Germany's DAX closed with a gain of 0.5 percent and France's CAC-40 rose 0.7 percent. Britain's FTSE 100 advanced 0.8 percent.

Consumer prices in Europe fell in December for the first time since 2009. The 0.2 percent drop was mainly the result of falling oil prices, something that could help consumers immediately. But falling prices also increase pressure on the European Central Bank to provide more stimulus for the region's flagging economy. Many analysts expect the bank to announce plans to buy government bonds later this month. After the report on prices came out, the euro slipped to \$1.1833 from \$1.1890. Markets barely moved following the release of minutes from the Federal Reserve's December policy meeting.

Monsanto earnings fall 34% on lower corn seed sales

MATTHEW PERRONE
AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Monsanto said Wednesday that its earnings fell 34 percent in the first fiscal quarter as South American farmers cut back on planting corn, reducing demand for the company's biotech-enhanced seeds.

U.S. farmers harvested record crops of soybeans and corn last year, sending prices on those food staples to their lowest levels in years. That has resulted in farmers in South America and else-

where reducing the number of acres they dedicate to corn. The company said lower corn plantings in the U.S. will likely reduce second quarter results by 5 to 10 percent compared with the prior year.

"The long-term demand fundamentals for corn and soybeans are intact," said Brett Begemann, chief commercial officer, on a call with analysts. "However, the currency and acreage headwinds from fiscal year 2014 continue into fiscal year 2015."

Begemann said corn acres were down 20 percent in Argentina and 10 percent in Brazil from the prior-year period.

The company said its business was also affected by reduced cotton planting in Australia and a shift in timing for its chemical business.

The St. Louis-based company reported a profit of \$243 million, or 50 cents per share, down from \$368 million, or 69 cents per share, in the prior year period. Earnings, adjusted to ac-

count for discontinued operations, came to 47 cents per share in the most recent quarter.

The results topped Wall Street expectations. The average estimate of analysts surveyed by Zacks Investment Research was for earnings of 34 cents per share.

The agricultural products company's revenue fell more than 8 percent to \$2.87 billion in the period, on lower sales of corn seeds and herbicide. Analysts expected \$2.96 billion,

according to Zacks.

Monsanto expects full-year earnings in the range of \$5.75 to \$6 per share.

The company's shares rose \$2.04, or 1.8 percent, to \$117.80 in midday trading. Its shares have risen about 3.7 percent over the past year.

Monsanto has dominated the bioengineered-seed business for more than a decade and recently began developing products specifically for emerging markets like Argentina, Brazil and parts of Asia.

Deal Professor:

Why McDonald's isn't Shake Shack, and probably shouldn't be

STEVEN D. SOLOMON

© 2015 New York Times

Wall Street wants McDonald's to be more like Shake Shack, the hamburger purveyor in New York that just filed for an initial public offering that could value it at a billion dollars. But perhaps instead, Wall Street should let McDonald's be McDonald's and be careful about whether Shake Shack is a burger bubble.

Shake Shack serves premium burgers, fries and shakes to a mass clientele - think Five Guys or In-N-Out Burger - and describes itself as a "modern day 'roadside' burger stand." The chain was started by celebrity chef Danny Meyer in 2004 with a hot dog cart in New York. Since then, Shake Shack has grown to 36 restaurants in the United States, five of which are franchisees, and 27 outside the United States, mainly in the Middle East.

If the chatter about Shake Shack's billion-dollar valuation is true, it would rival that of a technology startup. It would translate into \$37 million for each owned store, 185 times 2013 earnings of \$5.4 million and seven times 2013 sales of \$140 million. Even if the valuation is half that, those are still some amazingly heady numbers. In short, with this talk, it appears that Wall Street is about to line up for Shake Shack.

Then there is McDonald's. McDonald's, with a market value of \$90 billion, has more than 35,000 restaurants in more than 100 countries. While Wall Street appears to love Shake Shack, it disdains McDonald's.

McDonald's is valued much lower than its peer restaurant companies. According to S&P Capital IQ, Chipotle is valued at 26.5 times forward earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization, while Shake Shack would be valued at more than 300 times forward earnings at a billion-dollar valuation. McDonald's is valued at 10.3 times forward EBITDA, lower than all of its peers, includ-

ing Wendy's, Red Robin, the combined Burger King and Tim Hortons, and Yum Brands. With Shake Shack and other quick casual chains like Chipotle getting all the love, it is no surprise that McDonald's is feeling the pressure to be more like the young burger phenom. The Street.com, for example, recently posted an article titled "What Struggling McDonald's Could Learn From Shake Shack and Five Guys," while MarketWatch had one titled "How McDonald's Helped Shake Shack Go Public." To read these articles, you would think McDonald's was about to be tossed into the dustbin of history by Shake Shack, Chipotle and the other fast-casual chains.

There is also talk of shareholder activism. McDonald's has a low debt level and throws off tremendous cash, which could make it a target for a share buyback or some other financial maneuver. In addition, its low multiple makes it ripe for an activist to come in and try to engineer a quick boost in its market value.

However, these tricks typically work at companies that are not in turnaround mode, and while McDonald's is not about to go under, it has embarked on a turnaround plan that involves a simpler menu with fewer choices and high-quality ingredients. McDonald's is responding to the conventional wisdom that consumers, particularly millennials, want food that is perceived as higher quality. McDonald's, which itself started as a roadside

burger stand, is responding by emulating Shake Shack and Five Guys, but not entirely. The beloved McRib, for example, will remain in the menu rotation. But this all raises the ques-

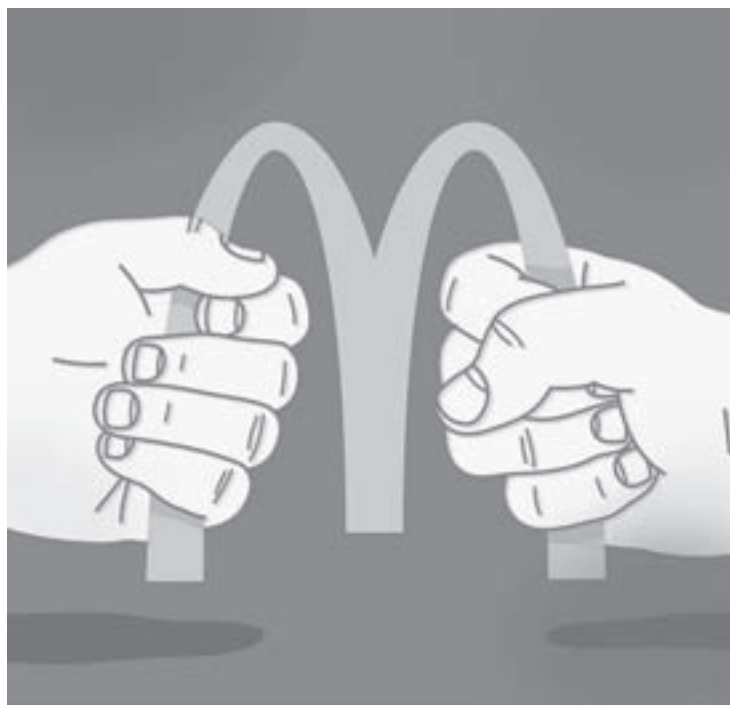
McDonald's can be is a big company that adjusts to changing tastes but still serves customers who don't want to spend a lot. Moving up in price is not going to work for McDonald's cur-

People who invest in Shake Shack are hoping to replicate Fairway, but successfully. This hope is fueled by a Wall Street burger craze. Habit Restaurants, which operates the Habit Burger Grill, raised \$90 million in November. Shares of the chain, which has about 100 restaurants, are trading at \$30 a share, up from the \$18 IPO price.

But there are warning signs. Shake Shack's Manhattan restaurants generate an average of \$7.4 million a year in revenue, but its other restaurants bring in only \$3.8 million. And it faces rivals like In-N-Out Burger, Five Guys and other burger chains like Habit. All this competition comes even as beef consumption has been declining in the United States. Even Shake Shack itself estimates that its market in the United States is only about 450 restaurants, about 1.3 percent the number of current McDonald's restaurants.

This does not mean that Shake Shack is not a successful business, or that it will not be worth a lot of money. It is just that it has a lot to accomplish to justify a lofty valuation. It may succeed, but it may end up like Fairway if the burger hype turns out to be a bubble. Wall Street should be more careful.

As for McDonald's, the more Wall Street expects it to be like Shake Shack, the more off the mark it is likely to be. Instead of trying to transform McDonald's, perhaps Wall Street should take a harder look at its premium burger fetish. □



While Wall Street appears to love Shake Shack, the hamburger purveyor in New York that just filed for an initial public offering, it disdains McDonald's, valuing it much lower than its peer restaurant companies.

(Harry Campbell/The New York Times)

tion of whether McDonald's should even go down this road.

First off, McDonald's is not Shake Shack. It has a lower price point: The average check size at McDonald's is about \$5 while a Shake Shack meal - burger, shake and fries - is \$13 in the United States, according to Eater.com. McDonald's is also in the fast-food category, while Shake Shack is in quick casual - which it calls fine casual - with Chipotle, another highflier.

McDonald's simply can't be Shake Shack, which has no ambitions to expand to 35,000 restaurants. What

rent customer base.

Second, there should be some recognition that the Shake Shack IPO is all about speculation. For a recent example, consider the IPO of Fairway, the New York grocery chain, in 2013. The company, with 12 stores, was valued at \$825 million. This was extraordinarily high but based on the belief that a New York premium grocery store with unbelievable New York store revenue could conquer the world.

It hasn't worked, and Fairway is now trading at \$3 a share, a drop of 83 percent over the last year.

Dunkin' strikes deal to open 1,400 stores in China

NEW YORK (AP) — Dunkin' Donuts confirmed Wednesday that it struck a deal to open more than 1,400 locations in China over the next 20 years. The chain said in an email there are currently 16 Dunkin' Donuts locations in the country.

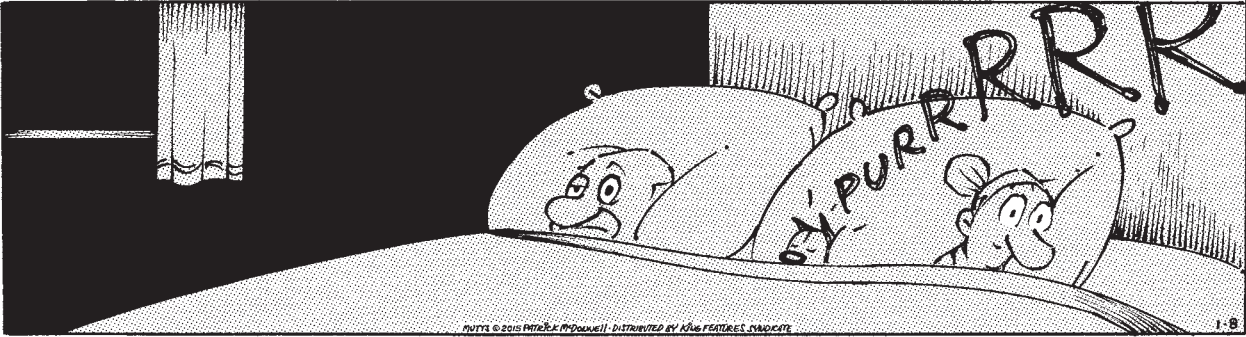
Parent company Dunkin' Brands, which is based in Canton, Massachusetts and also owns Baskin Robbins, said it entered into a master



franchise agreement with Golden Cup Pte. Ltd. The group is a joint venture between Jollibee Worldwide Pte Ltd., based in the Philippines, and Jasmine Asset Holding Ltd, a unit of investment firm RRJ Capital Master Fund II, L.P., according to Dunkin'.

The deal was noted Wednesday by Janney analyst Mark Kalinowski, who cited an overseas report about it. □

Mutts



6 Chix



Blondie



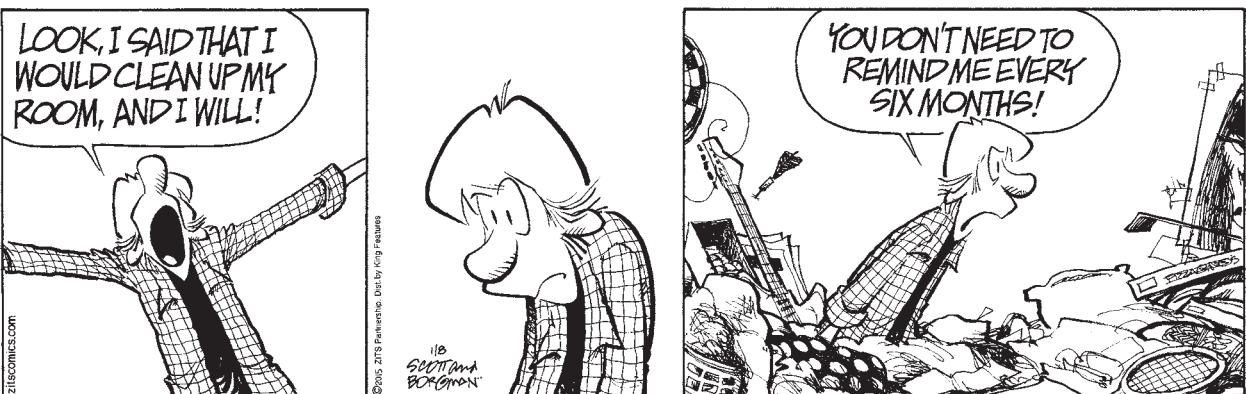
Mother Goose & Grimm



Baby Blues



Zits



Conceptis Sudoku

			5	6	8			
		1				4		
	2			3			6	
9								7
1		4				5		8
8								6
	9			5			2	
		8				3		
			6	9	4			

Difficulty Level ★★★

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Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

Yesterday's puzzle answer

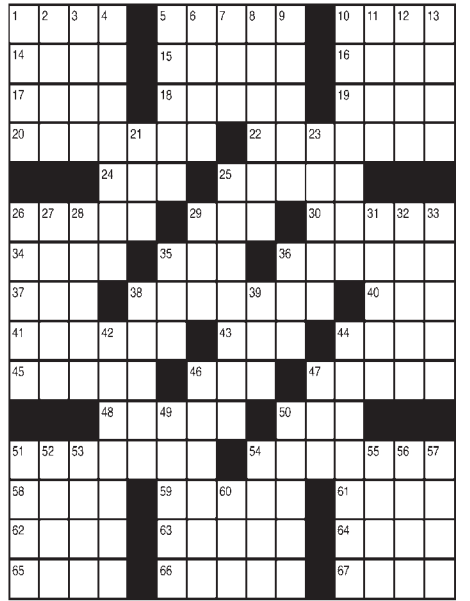
9	3	5	2	6	7	4	8	1
7	2	8	5	1	4	9	6	3
6	1	4	3	9	8	5	7	2
1	8	3	7	5	2	6	4	9
4	7	6	1	3	9	8	2	5
2	5	9	4	8	6	1	3	7
8	4	7	9	2	5	3	1	6
5	6	1	8	7	3	2	9	4
3	9	2	6	4	1	7	5	8

ACROSS

- Periodontist's concern
- Become sore from rubbing
- Neighbor of Nevada
- Feels put-; resents
- Equestrian
- 3 biblical kings
- Zero, in tennis
- Fudd of cartoons
- Walk heavily
- Bump, as a TV show
- Surround and attack
- Regret
- More ancient
- Rowed
- Deli loaf
- Instruct
- Snow vehicle
- Public transport
- Biceps or triceps
- Taxi
- Dirty run-down building
- West who was Diamond Lil
- Aviator Earhart
- Dine
- Group of cattle
- Acting parts
- Upper limb
- Disguises
- Bookish fellows
- London bar
- Concert-goer's brochure
- Enchanting
- Torn in two
- Groucho's prop
- Sticky strip
- Every
- Wipe away
- Eras
- on; victimize
- Takes a break
- Examination

DOWN

- Swallow hard
- "Shape __ ship out!"



Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews

1/8/15

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

WOOS	STRAP	GRAB
HOOR	ERASE	ROLE
OPTS	LIGHTHOUSE	
ASS	FLEE	OUTOF
MULES	BAN	
LOAFER	GORDON	
ARROW	PLEAD	VET
VATS	PAINT	BEAR
ATE	SLIDE	BERRA
EDITOR	CLASSY	
ROD	GAUNT	
IGLOO	WANE	APT
ROUNDA	ABOUT	UTAH
KATE	SURGE	PERU
SLED	ASNER	ASKS

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1/8/15

- Interminable, as a speech
- Natural environment
- Think highly of
- Big coffee cup
- Foyt or Unser
- Removes potato skin
- Get ready, for short
- Raise, as kids
- A single time
- Ship's pole
- Canary's home
- Mimics
- In case
- Auto fuel

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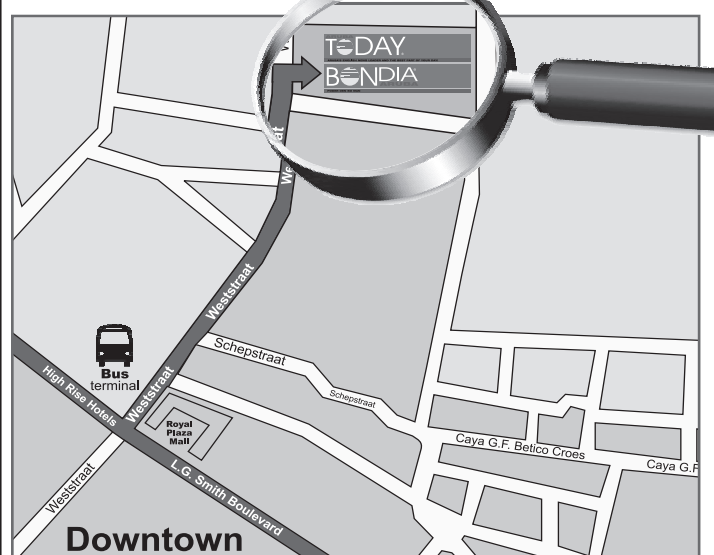


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Scientists: Weather plays big role in Lake Erie 'dead zones'

By **JOHN FLESHER**
AP Environmental Writer
TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. (AP)

— Reducing phosphorus levels in Lake Erie is a worthy goal but not necessarily a cure-all for one of the lake's biggest environmental hazards: "dead zones" with oxygen levels so low that fish can't survive, scientists said Tuesday. Researchers with the Carnegie Institution for Science said Erie's biggest dead zone on record formed in summer 2012. While phosphorus-laden fertilizer runoff from farms played a part, weather conditions including drought and low flows from tributary rivers and streams were even more influential, they said. The findings suggest policymakers working on plans for combating the lake's dead zones - and its worsening problem of harmful algae blooms - should consider meteorological trends as well as agricultural management practices, said environmental scientist Anna Michalak, who led the study. That's especially the case as climate change brings more



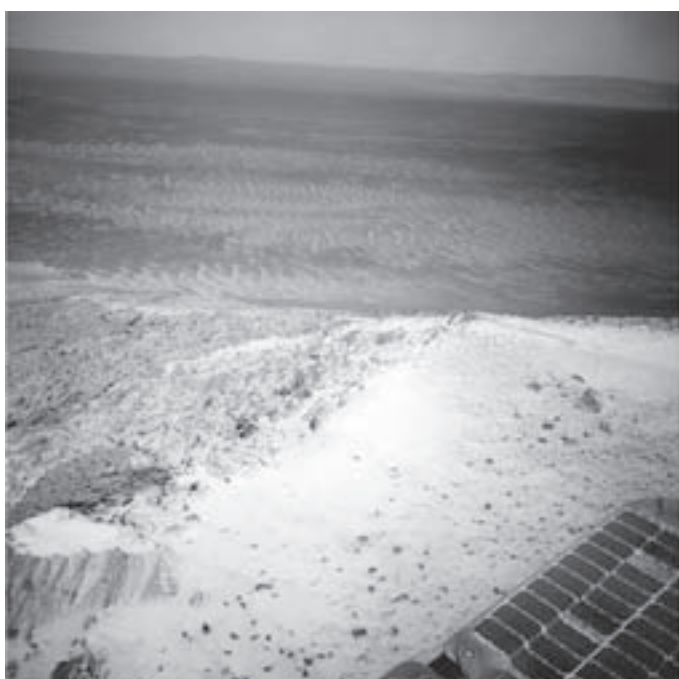
Satellite image of a toxic algae bloom in Lake Erie in 2011, one of the worst blooms in recent years.

extreme weather, she said. "It means we need to be careful in our assumptions about how management is going to affect" oxygen levels in the water, Michalak said. "Reducing nutrient input won't always give you as much bang for the buck as you might assume." Although Erie is the shallowest of the five Great Lakes, with an average depth of just 62 feet, it produces more of the types of fish

that people eat - such as walleye and perch - than the others combined. But it has suffered some of the worst pollution damage. Phosphorus and other nutrients in runoff from farms, sewage plants and other sources deplete oxygen and enlarge Erie's annual dead zones. The nutrients also feed massive blooms of cyanobacteria - commonly known as blue-green algae.

An outbreak last August prompted a two-day drinking water ban in northwestern Ohio, including Toledo, and southeastern Michigan. When the algae die and decay, oxygen levels drop further, sometimes reaching levels too low to sustain life. The largest known algae bloom formed in 2011, following a stormy, wet spring. The Carnegie researchers found that the next year,

which featured drought and little algae, a dead zone as large as Yellowstone National Park spread across the lake's central basin. It covered about 3,400 square miles - the biggest since measurements began in the mid-1980s and more than double the average size of the zone, which typically peaks in late summer. The fact that the record-setting dead zone formed in a low-algae year shows the crucial role of weather, Michalak said. Water flow from tributaries into the lake was the lowest ever measured. Additionally, strong northwesterly winds pushed nutrients from the western basin into the central basin. "What this research is showing is that ... the meteorological factors are as important in determining the size of the dead zone in a given year as nutrient loading is," she said. Great Lakes scientists who didn't participate in the study agreed weather affects Lake Erie's dead zones, but said cutbacks in phosphorus runoff are still urgently needed. □



Opportunity rover takes in view from top of Martian hill

PASADENA, California (AP) — NASA's Opportunity rover is soaking in the view from its perch atop a Martian hill as engineers continue to fix a problem with its computer memory. The aging rover beamed new images to Earth on Wednesday, confirming it reached the hill informally

called Cape Tribulation. Opportunity landed on Mars more than a decade ago and has recently suffered bouts of amnesia stemming from an issue with its flash memory. The six-wheel rover has been able to drive despite the occasional memory lapse.

Opportunity will spend several days at the summit snapping pictures that engineers will stitch into a color panorama. Project manager John Callas says the rover will try to find interesting rocks to study. If there are none to be found, it will keep driving. □

This image sent by NASA's Opportunity rover on Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2015 shows a view from atop a Martian hill.

Associated Press



In this Oct. 20, 2014 file photo, Amy Poehler arrives at ELLE's 21st annual Women In Hollywood Awards at the Four Season Hotel in Los Angeles. Associated Press

Amy Poehler named Harvard's Hasty Pudding woman of the year

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. (AP) — Comedy star Amy Poehler has been named 2015 Woman of the Year by Harvard University's Hasty Pudding Theatricals. The group said Tuesday that Poehler's comedy "fits so well with the Pudding's own tradition of satire and social commentary." Poehler has a 2014 Golden Globe award and five Emmy nominations for her role as Leslie Knope on the NBC comedy series "Parks

and Recreation." She co-hosts the Globes telecast with Tina Fey on Sunday. Hasty Pudding is the nation's oldest undergraduate drama troupe, dating to the late 18th century. Its annual awards go to performers who have made a lasting and impressive contribution. Last year's winners were Helen Mirren and Neil Patrick Harris. Poehler will get a parade and roast Jan. 29. The man of the year will be announced later. □



Actress Angela Bassett, second from left, making her directorial debut with the Lifetime film "Whitney," poses with cast members, left to right, Suzanne Douglas, Arlen Escarpeta, Yaya DaCosta and Yolonda Ross at the premiere of the film at the Paley Center for Media on Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2015, in Beverly Hills, Calif. Associated Press

Family absent from premiere of Whitney Houston biopic

MIKE CIDONI LENNOX
AP Entertainment Writer
BEVERLY HILLS, California
(AP) — Colleagues and friends of Whitney Houston gathered Tuesday night to screen "Whitney," a new telefilm about the beloved entertainer's triumphant career, often troubled life and tragic death. But Houston's family was conspicuously absent from

the premiere, which took place at the Paley Center for Media, located just blocks away from The Beverly Hilton hotel, where the 48-year-old Houston drowned in her guest room in February 2012. The official coroner's report listed heart disease and cocaine as contributing factors in her death. Relatives were invited to participate in the "Whitney" project from the start, explained Angela Bassett, the Oscar-nominated actress marking her feature-directing debut with the biopic, which debuts Jan. 17 on the Lifetime cable network.

"And it was the family's choice and decision, because of what they want to do and whatever their desires or their plans are, not to be involved in this one," Bassett said. "But they didn't have anything negative to say about it. You know, sometimes to be silent is the greatest gift." And at least the family could breathe a bit easier knowing Bassett was at the helm. The "Whitney" director and Houston worked closely during production and promotion of the 1994 big-screen drama "Waiting to Exhale," and Bassett ex-

pressed fond memories of her co-star.

"To have had that experience of being around her," noted Bassett, "all that came back to serve me in the making of this." Nevertheless, without the family's blessing, the "Whitney" production was not allowed to use Houston's original recordings. So, to deliver something approximating Houston's remarkable voice, Bassett hired singer Deborah Cox, Houston's one-time label mate, recording partner and long-time friend.

Cox took the gig, even if it was destined to be a thankless one.

"I knew I would be judged," Cox said, with a smile. "Everyone was going to come for me. Don't. I come with love."

As did actress Yaya DaCosta ("Lee Daniels' The Butler"), who said she took on the role of Houston concerned about just one critic: Houston herself.

"When we were on set, that's all I thought about: 'I don't really care what any living person thinks. I want to make her proud,'" DaCosta recalled. "And that, for me, is all I needed to be OK with this project." □

Cameron Diaz marries Benji Madden at their L.A. home

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Cameron Diaz is a newlywed. A spokesman for the actress confirms Diaz married musician Benji Madden on Monday night. Publicist Brad Cafarelli says the couple wed in an intimate ceremony at their Los Angeles home. It's the first marriage for the 42-year-old actress and the 35-year-old rocker. Madden's twin brother and Good Charlotte band mate, Joel Madden, is married to Nicole Richie. Diaz's most recent film credits include "Annie," "Sex Tape" and "The Other Woman." □



In this Dec. 16, 2014 file photo, actress Cameron Diaz poses for photographs during a photo call for the film Annie at the Corinthia hotel in central London. Associated Press

Netflix says it wants to stream 'The Interview'



In this Wednesday, Dec. 24, 2014 file photo, a computer screen shows Sony Pictures' film, "The Interview" available for rental on YouTube Movies, in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

DAVID BAUDER
AP Television Writer
PASADENA, Calif. (AP) —

The streaming service Netflix wants to make Sony's "The Interview" available to its 53 million worldwide subscribers, Netflix's chief content officer said on Wednesday.

Ted Sarandos of Netflix

would not comment on efforts to make that possible, however. The movie starring Seth Rogen and James Franco is available on some other video services and in some independent theaters, after its wide release was canceled due to the Sony hacking scandal. "People want to see the

movie and we want to be able to deliver the movie," Sarandos told reporters at a television conference. Sony had no immediate comment on that possibility. Rogen and Franco play journalists involved in a CIA plot to kill North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. Before the movie could be released, the Sony studio's computer system was hacked by unknown assailants linked to North Korea, leading the studio to ditch plans to release the movie widely on Christmas day. Even without Netflix, Sony Pictures Entertainment said this week that "The Interview" has been rented or purchased online more than 4.3 million times, totaling over \$31 million in consumer sales. Sony says that has made it the company's top online film ever; it has made \$5 million in theater box office.

Review: James Abel delivers a winner with 'White Plague'

JEFF AYERS
Associated Press

James Abel's new thriller, "White Plague," combines elements from "The Hunt for Red October" and the cutting-edge science from the best of Michael Crichton to send chills down the reader's spine.

Marine doctor Joe Rush is sent into action when times are desperate. Besides being a top-ranked physician, he can also lead a team into potentially hostile and lethal situations involving bioweapons. He's earned the nickname "Killer Joe," thanks to an earlier, still classified mission, but he does his best to ignore questions about how he earned the moniker.

Rush receives orders to lead a team into the Arctic Ocean to rescue the crew of the USS Montana, a vessel that is in flames and adrift off the coast of Alaska. Can Rush and his team rescue the survivors in time? To make the situation more grim, a Chinese submarine is headed there as well, and it's obvious to Rush that the Chinese want the ship's technology. When the survivors are located, they show signs of being sick. Viruses are Rush's specialty, but this pathogen may be beyond his level of expertise.

Abel is the pseudonym of an author who has the gift of creating page-turning fiction that reads like non-fiction. "White Plague" is so believable it feels like the author is reporting actual events. Readers will be eagerly awaiting the next adventure featuring Joe Rush, but it's difficult to imagine how Abel will be able to top this winner.

Gay advocates assail new TV show 'My Husband's Not Gay'

LINDSAY WHITEHURST
Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Preston "Pret" Dahlgren has led what might seem like a picture-perfect Mormon life: He met his future bride in Sunday religious classes as a teenager, completed his mission and married her. He is active in the church and the proud father of two young daughters.

Dahlgren also is attracted to men.

His story is the subject of a new TV show called "My Husband's Not Gay," which gay-rights advocacy groups are calling irresponsible and dangerous. They want the TLC cable network to pull the plug on the program before it airs Sunday.

Dahlgren and another Mormon man from Utah featured in the show say they're happy in their marriages, and they hope the program shows gives stories like theirs a foothold in the conversation about sexual-



Preston "Pret" and Megan Dahlgren kiss during an interview Monday, Jan. 5, 2015, near Salt Lake City. Two Utah men set to appear in the reality TV show "My Husband's Not Gay," say they're fulfilled in their relationships to their wives even though they're attracted to other men.

Associated Press

ity.

Dahlgren, 32, said he's known he was attracted to men since he was about 12 years old, but he also always wanted the kind of family he grew up in: a father, mother and children. The gay rights group GLAAD, however, says the show sends the wrong mes-

sage and is a sad reminder of so-called gay conversion therapy, often faith-based efforts designed to change sexual orientation that can be emotionally scarring. New Jersey and California in 2013 banned therapists from practicing gay conversion therapy on children and teenagers. The Ameri-

can Medical Association and the American Psychological Association do not support the therapy.

"No one can change who they love, and, more importantly, no one should have to," GLAAD president Sarah Kate Ellis said in a statement. "By investing in this dangerous programming, TLC is putting countless young LGBT people in harm's way."

The organization pointed to a change.org petition asking TLC to cancel the show that so far has gathered more than 80,000 signatures. Responding to GLAAD, the network says it will tell compelling stories about different ways of life, and the four men on the hourlong show speak only for themselves.

Jeff Bennion, 44, met his wife, Tanya, more than 13 years ago after he had dated men. He told her he was attracted to men after they'd been dating for about a year and a half.

"I was devastated because I didn't know what that meant for me," said Tanya Bennion, 42. She worried that he'd cheat on her with a friend but said the couple's strong connection helped her work through her questions.

Megan Dahlgren says her marriage remains strong, including the physical aspects of their relationship. "We do have a happy, healthy sex life," she said.

Dahlgren and Bennion both said their upbringing in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was a big part of why they wanted to remain in a husband-and-wife relationship.

"I would say it was part of my decision early on, especially, and a big influencer of that," Dahlgren said. "It certainly helped guide me toward where I'm at today, no doubt about it."

Church spokesman Eric Hawkins said in a statement Tuesday that marriage is deeply personal.

Presidents and the Economy



PAUL KRUGMAN
© 2015 New York Times

Suddenly, or so it seems, the U.S. economy is looking better. Things have been looking up for a while, but at this point the signs of improvement - job gains, rapidly growing GDP, rising public confidence - are unmistakable.

The improving economy is surely one factor in President Barack Obama's rising approval rating. And there's a palpable sense of panic among Republicans, despite their victory in the midterms. They expected to run in 2016 against a record of failure; what do they do if the economy is looking pretty good?

Well, that's their problem. What I want to ask instead is whether any of this makes sense. How much influence does the occupant of the White House have on the economy, anyway? The standard answer among economists, at least when they aren't being political hacks, is: not much. But is this time different?

To understand why economists usually downplay the economic role of presidents, let's revisit a much-mythologized episode in U.S. economic history: the recession and recovery of the 1980s.

On the right, of course, the 1980s are remembered as an age of miracles wrought by the blessed Reagan, who cut taxes, conjured up the magic of the marketplace and led the nation to job gains never matched before or since. In reality, the 16 million jobs America added during the Reagan years were only slightly more than the 14 million added over the previous eight years. And a later president - Bill something-or-other - presided over the creation of 22 million jobs. But who's counting?

In any case, however, serious analyses of the Reagan-era business cycle place very little weight on Reagan, and emphasize instead the role of the Federal Reserve, which sets monetary policy and is largely independent of the political process. At the beginning of the 1980s, the Fed, under the leadership of Paul Volcker, was determined to bring inflation down, even at a heavy price; it tightened policy, sending interest rates sky high, with mortgage rates going above 18 percent. What followed was a severe recession that drove unemployment to double digits but also broke the wage-price spiral.

Then the Fed decided that America had suffered enough.

It loosened the reins, sending interest rates plummeting and housing starts soaring. And the economy bounced back. Reagan got the political credit for "morning in America," but Volcker was actually responsible for both the slump and the boom.

The point is that normally the Fed, not the White House, rules the economy. Should we apply the same rule to the Obama years?

Not quite.

For one thing, the Fed has had a hard time gaining traction in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, because the aftermath of a huge housing and mortgage bubble has left private spending relatively unresponsive to interest rates. This time around, monetary policy really needed help from a temporary increase in government spending, which meant that the president could have made a big difference. And he did, for a while; politically, the Obama stimulus may have been a failure, but an overwhelming majority of economists believe that it helped mitigate the slump.

Since then, however, scorched-earth Republican opposition has more than reversed that initial effort. In fact, federal spending adjusted for inflation and population growth is lower now than it was when Obama took office; at the same point in the Reagan years, it was up more than 20 percent. So much, then, for fiscal policy.

There is, however, another sense in which Obama has arguably made a big difference. The Fed has had a hard time getting traction, but it has at least made an effort to boost the economy - and it has done so despite ferocious attacks from conservatives, who have accused it again and again of "debasing the dollar" and setting the stage for runaway inflation. Without Obama to shield its independence, the Fed might well have been bullied into raising interest rates, which would have been disastrous. So the president has indirectly aided the economy by helping to fend off the hard-money mob. Last but not least, even if you think Obama deserves little or no credit for good economic news, the fact is his opponents have spent years claiming that his bad attitude - he has been known to suggest, now and then, that some bankers have behaved badly - is somehow responsible for the economy's weakness. Now that he's presiding over unexpected economic strength, they can't just turn around and assert his irrelevance.

So is the president responsible for the accelerating recovery? No. Can we nonetheless say that we're doing better than we would be if the other party held the White House? Yes. Do those who were blaming Obama for all our economic ills now look like knaves and fools? Yes, they do. And that's because they are. □



Confessions of a Columnist



ROSS DOUTHAT
© 2015 New York Times

In the new year, it goes without saying that we should all eat more vegetables, exercise more often, tweet or text a little less and pray a little more. But for the professional pundit, there's really only one resolution that matters: Be less wrong. So in that spirit, here is my annual inventory of the places where I went astray in 2014, offered in the hope that beginning 2015 with a confession will lead to fewer mistakes in the year to come.

1. I thought Jeb Bush wasn't really serious about 2016. In two columns on the Republican presidential field, in March and in November, I didn't exactly write off a Bush candidacy. But I spent far more time on Marco Rubio (whose chances I felt were being underestimated) and Rand Paul, and to a lesser extent Chris Christie and Ted Cruz, than I did on the former Florida governor.

That's because I strongly suspected various forces would keep Bush on the sidelines: his wife's likely opposition, a sense of Bush-dynasty fatigue among the party's machers, and all the very human reasons a wealthy, comfortable, relaxed 60-something who last campaigned for office a dozen years ago might decide to pass on the presidential madhouse.

These suspicions could still be vindicated; Bush's recently announced "exploration" could end before the first primary vote is cast. But he suddenly looks much more like a full-speed-ahead candidate than I ex-

pected, and - in what counts as clear bad news for Rubio and Christie, among others - many of the party's donors and operatives seem not at all deterred by his filial connection to a deeply unpopular president.

Jeb the serious candidate isn't Jeb the front-runner, or at least not yet. But his apparent plan to run is a big, important 2016 fact, and one my 2014 columns failed to sufficiently anticipate.

2. I was too optimistic about the prospects for demilitarizing the police. In an August column during the early days of protest in Ferguson, Missouri, I argued that while many reforms to the criminal justice system might come with difficult trade-offs, the case for limiting the flow of heavy weapons - grenade launchers, armored cars, and so on - from the military to local police departments was "easy, uncomplicated, clear." Crime rates keep falling, the threat of terrorism is more marginal than it seemed after 9/11, and there isn't a justification for giving cops in places like Ferguson the armaments of an occupying force.

To which I would have been wise to add: "And yet they're likely to keep getting weapons anyway." The flurry of congressional interest faded once police unions flexed some muscle. The White House is notionally committed to tougher standards, but its proposals seem likely to add paperwork without meaningfully reducing the flow of arms.

Programs in motion tend to stay in motion, that much is always true. But I didn't foresee that Ferguson itself, initially a story that produced bipartisan sympathy for the protesters, would turn into a weak and polarizing exhibit in the case for policing reform.

The persistent rioting made the argument that the cops needed all their gear seem more plausible (though I am not convinced), and the facts of the

original tragedy, the shooting of Michael Brown, turned out to make a weaker case against the police than suggested by the initial coverage.

The hard truth - which is also on display in New York right now - is that crime and punishment stir up (for good reason) the strongest of human emotions, which makes achieving consensus on reform slow, hard work. This process can be hastened by particular injustices, but when the facts are bad or complicated, it can just as easily be set back.

3. I gave America's Ebola countermeasures too little credit. In an October column on the public health fiascos that allowed the deadly virus to infect U.S. health care workers, I wrote that if "we manage to contain Ebola domestically, then the president and his appointees will look more competent and levelheaded than their critics." But I wasn't particularly confident in that outcome, and so - worried about a wider outbreak - I also wrote that "travel restrictions increasingly seem like an appropriate hedge against ongoing domestic incompetence."

Two months later, there has been no wider outbreak, most of the cases treated domestically have resulted in a cure, and the president and his appointees can reasonably claim vindication. (As can Dr. Paul Farmer, the famous physician-humanitarian, who argued in an October essay for the London Review of Books that with Western standards of medical treatment, Ebola victims could have a 90 percent survival rate.) So I was too alarmist, often a pundit's besetting vice.

But while pessimism can be an analytic mistake, it's the happiest way to be wrong. So if infallibility remains out of reach, my hope for 2015 is that my columns will only err in undue pessimism and that reality will only surprise me - and you, and all of us - with good news. □



Humble Leeks Add Brightness to Winter

Leek soup topped with creme fraiche and herbs in New York. A thoroughly rinsed leek, kept from overcooking, can offer a pleasant surprise for winter meals whether in soup or vinaigrette.

(Fred R. Conrad/The New York Times)

DAVID TANIS

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In my experience, leeks are usually terribly overcooked or strangely undercooked. Either way, it's a sad situation: It's so easy to get them right, and results can be sublime.

Take leeks vinaigrette, the humble yet iconic French dish. In fact, the French have also named it asperges du pauvre, poor man's asparagus. And just like asparagus, a leek needs careful cooking.

Yet even in France, where they ought to know better, it can be hard to get a good version in a restaurant. I still cringe at the memory of a seriously overcooked, offensively bland leek salad served in a famous bistro there, which more or less persuaded me to eat only leeks cooked at home. For starters, choose the right leek. A giant leek, 2 feet long, belongs in the stockpot; even for soup, a smaller leek is better.

For leeks vinaigrette, you want a fresh-looking leek, medium size or smaller. (But don't go too small; so-called baby leeks can often taste grassy.)

Now, pay attention: Simmer your leeks gently in well-salted water. Don't let them boil and don't let them go too long. They should be tender and silky, not mushy or stringy. Conversely, if not cooked enough, they'll be unpleasantly chewy. And never refrigerate leeks once cooked; they taste far better at room temperature, or they can be browned beneath a broiler or on a grill to serve warm.

Be sure to dress them with an assertive vinaigrette. The leeks' sweetness needs a hit of red wine vinegar and mustard, even chopped capers or anchovy. Hard-cooked egg and crisp bread crumbs can provide welcome textural contrast. Whether you choose to make the emerald green leek soup or the warm leeks vinaigrette, you'll see that even a leek, treated properly, can make an excellent meal.

GREEN LEEK SOUP

Time: 1 hour, plus cooling

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

6 medium leeks, about 3 pounds

4 tablespoons butter

Salt and pepper

4 garlic cloves, minced

Pinch of cayenne

1/2 cup rice

8 cups hot chicken broth or water

10 ounces baby spinach, washed

Grated nutmeg, to taste

1/2 cup crème fraîche

2 tablespoons thinly sliced chives, for garnish

2 tablespoons thinly sliced tarragon, for garnish

1. Trim leeks of outer layer and stems. Chop white and tender green parts into 1/2-inch chunks.

2. Melt butter in a heavy-bottomed soup pot over medium heat. Add leeks and season well with salt and pepper. Cook, stirring, until leeks are wilted, about 8 to 10 minutes.

3. Add garlic, cayenne and rice and cook for 1 minute. Add hot broth and bring to a boil, then reduce to a gentle simmer. Simmer until rice is very soft, about 25 minutes. Remove from heat and let cool completely before proceeding.

4. Using a blender, purée raw spinach with cooled soup mixture. Strain through a fine-meshed sieve, discarding any fibrous solids.

Adjust seasoning and add grated nutmeg. Thin with broth or water if necessary.

5. Heat soup before serving, to preserve bright green color. Garnish with a tablespoon of crème fraîche and a sprinkling of chives and tarragon.

LEEEKS VINAIGRETTE

Time: 1 hour

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

8 medium leeks, about 4 pounds

3 tablespoons red wine vinegar

2 tablespoons Dijon mustard

1 garlic clove, minced

Salt and pepper

Extra-virgin olive oil

2 cups coarse bread crumbs

2 tablespoons chopped thyme

1/2 cup grated Parmesan

4 tablespoons chopped parsley

3 hard-cooked eggs (9-minute eggs), roughly chopped

1. Bring a large pot of salted water to a simmer. Cut leeks crosswise and divide into white bottoms and green tops.

2. Add the white pieces to the pot and simmer for 8

to 10 minutes. Using tongs, remove the white pieces, then cook the green pieces for 4 to 5 minutes. Both white and green pieces should be tender when probed with a paring knife. Blot dry. Transfer to a baking dish in one layer. Let cool.

3. Make the vinaigrette: In a small bowl, whisk together vinegar, mustard and garlic. Season with salt and pepper, then whisk in 6 tablespoons olive oil. Set aside.

4. Heat oven to 375 degrees. In a mixing bowl, combine bread crumbs, thyme and Parmesan. Add 2 tablespoons olive oil and salt and pepper; toss well. Spread crumbs on a baking sheet. Bake for 8 to 10 minutes, until crisp and golden. When cool, mix in 2 tablespoons parsley.

5. Heat broiler. Brush leeks lightly with olive oil and place several inches from flame. Broil for about 5 minutes, until browned and lightly charred.

6. Spoon vinaigrette evenly over leeks. Top with crumbs and egg. Sprinkle with remaining parsley. Serve warm. □